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DIBDIN'S

HISTORY

OF THE

STAGE.

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A

COMPLETE HISTORY

OF THE ENGLISH

STAGE.

WRITTEN BY

MR. CHARLES DIBDIN.

THE PLAYERS CANNOT KEEP COUNSEL; THEY'LL TELL ALL.

VOL. IV.

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THE

STAGE.

BOOK V.

RROM THE DEATH OF JAMES TO THE REVOLUTION.

CHAP I.

GENERAL STATE OF THE STAGE TO THE RESTORATION.

As, in order to keep the life of every ſeparate poet within the reader's view, I have found it impoſſible to avoid going in ſome inſtances beyond the death of JAMES, ſo upon the ſame principle I have kept back ſeveral authors who might with great propriety have been mentioned, had it not appeared neceſſary that their whole writings ſhould alſo be ſeen and examined together.

Another reaſon for my adoption of this conduct

is that, though, as we come forwarder, it would be naturally expected that facts and circumſtances ſhould wear a moſt decided and defined aſpect, the impoſſibility of this happens to be apparent; for the troubles of CHARLES, the firſt, ſo involved in doubt and uncertainty many particulars relative to the theatre, that the early plays of SHIRLEY, BROME, and others, could not poſſibly bear the dates we ſee affixed to them, and for the ſimple reaſon that actors and playhouſes were at thoſe times prohibited.

We know that CHARLES the firſt, who was taught muſic by COPERARIO, and dancing at the particular requeſt of his father, was very fond of dramatic amuſements; but theſe were generally maſques; for plays dwindled after the death of SHAKESPEAR, which has been proved by the variety of enemies JONSON conjured up, moſt of which attacked him ſucceſsfully; but, by the time PRYNNE, the COLLIER of his day, came to publiſh his ſtrictures, which, though he was a ſacrifice, ſerved the cauſe of the Puritans, the intereſt of the theatre was very materially ſhaken, and this was in 1633.

Theſe facts admitted, no man in his ſenſes, and with a correct knowledge of the ſubject, can venture to aſſert that from the death of JONSON even to the

Reſtoration, many novelties, at leaſt of a regular and meritorious kind, could poſſibly have been brought out; but, when you ſee the titles of plays that bear date all the way from the calling of the long parliament to the abdication of RICHARD CROMWELL, nothing can be ſo abſurd as to believe that they were then produced; for during the troubles, not only the theatres were ſhut up but the actors were nobly acting their parts, and that in moſt honourable ſituations, by defending their king in the field of battle; in which duty they acquitted themſelves with ſo much ſpirit, courage, and loyalty, that but one malcontent appeared among them, and he, having ſeceded only from religious motives, took no active part on either ſide. His name was SWANSTON.

As we hear nothing at this time of BURBAGE, HEMMINGS, and CONDELL, they had probably retired from this earthly ſtage, for LOWIN, TAYLER, and POLLARD, were ſo old that, though they fervently gave the king their ſincereſt good wiſhes, they had nothing better to offer for his ſervice. It was, however, different with thoſe who had ſtrength and were young enough to manifeſt their more active duty.

MOHUN had firſt a company and afterwards a

majority; HART had a troop of horſe in Prince RUPERT's regiment, under ſir THOMAS DALLISON; BURT was a cornet in the ſame troop, and SHATTERSEL a quarter maſter; ALLEN, of the Cockpit, was a major and quarter maſter general, and ROBINSON, who had ſome important commiſſion, was killed by that HARRISON who was hanged afterwards at Charing Croſs, and who ſurprized and ſurrounded ROBINSON with a ſtrong party, which it was impoſſible for him to cope with, and butchered him after he had lain down his arms, crying out, "Curſed be he that doeth the work of the LORD "negligently."

So many others nobly fell in the cauſe of their ſovereign that not more than enough to furbiſh up a tolerable company remained after the troubles, though LOWIN, TAYLER, and POLLARD, old as they were, made a part of it. Theſe were obliged to perform by ſtealth; and, though they contrived by ſome means to get poſſeſſion of the Cockpit, they were not only obliged to invite their audiences with the greateſt privacy, but even to be cautious of whom thoſe audiences were compoſed.

Further to ſet this clear, in October, 1647, and in February, 1648, ordinances were iſſued from the long parliament, in which "all ſtage plays and in-

" terludes were abſolutely forbid. Stages, ſeats, " and galleries were ordered to be pulled down, " and all players, though calling themſelves the " king's or queen's ſervants, to be puniſhed as " rogues and vagabonds; the money received at " the doors to go to the poor of the pariſh, and " every ſpectator to pay five ſhillings alſo for the " uſe of the poor."

The conſequence of being driven to this neceſſity is obvious, After being undiſturbed for a very ſhort time, information was given againſt them; and, as they were performing The *Bloody Brother*, in which LOWIN acted Aubrey, TAYLER Rollo, POLLARD the cook, BURT Latorch, and HART Otto, a party of ſoldiers ſurprized them in the middle of the play and carried them off, habits and all, to Hatton Houſe, from whence, after keeping them ſome time, they ſtript them and let them looſe again.

After this a few noblemen, who were not unmindful of their merit and ſervices, invited theſe poor forſaken wretches to perform at their houſes, and Holland Houſe at Kenſington, in particular was now and then fitted up for their reception. The actors, however, and their audiences were

obliged to be a little cautious, for both their profeſſion and their principles were of courſe obnoxious to OLIVER and his party.

Thus ſituated they were obliged to keep a good look out; and GOFFE, who uſed to perform the female parts, and who had a very ſkilful and animating addreſs, not only uſed to plead their cauſe to their patrons and excite them to relieve their diſtreſs, but he bribed the officers and others who were commanded to watch over them, by which means they were now and then winked at, or elſe ſo put upon their guard, that they knew how to get out of the way when the hue and cry was after them.

In addition to this precarious and humiliating way of picking up a bare ſubſiſtence, they got together old editions of plays and publiſhed them by ſubſcription, and this fact almoſt eſtabliſhes a certainty that the plays dated at that time were generally reprints.

One of theſe plays, The *Wild Gooſe Chaſe*, by BEAUMONT and FLETCHER, was publiſhed in 1652, "for the public uſe," ſays the title page, "of all "the ingenious, and the private benefit of JOHN "LOWIN, and JOSEPH TAYLER, ſervants to his

" late majeſty, and by them dedicated to the ho-
" noured few lovers of dramatic poeſy."

In the dedication they ſo modeſtly deſcribed their wants, that the play ſold very well; and, in ſo many inſtances as the experiment was repeated, they found it turn tolerably to account, but not equal to their exigenices, and therefore, ſuch as knew any thing of buſineſs endeavoured at eſtabliſhing themſelves. Being however a ſet of proſcribed characters, and what was worſe, intolerably poor, it was difficult for them to know what calling to chuſe, and how to find capital to carry on buſineſs.

POLLARD was the richeſt among them, but he left them at length, at the inſtance of his relations in the country, where he died about 1658 at a very great age; LOWIN kept an inn at Brentford, called the Three Pigeons, and at length died very poor, and at leaſt as old as POLLARD. TAYLER was in ſome trifling buſineſs at RICHMOND, where he alſo died very old; and PERKINS and SUMNER, who followed ſome occupation together near Clerkenwell, did not linger long after their companions.

Some of the reſt, as we ſhall ſee hereafter, being younger men, ſaw out the troubles and became the

principal actors immediately after the Reſtoration. HART, and others, notwithſtanding their adverſity during CROMWELL's uſurpation, made fortunes in the reign of CHARLES the ſecond.

There are many circumſtances related by which we are deſired to credit that after the total proſcription of the theatre, which was in 1647, ſucceſsful attempts were made to bring it again into reputation. I cannot, however, in ſpight of my inclination to believe this, and my diligence to find it confirmed, ſee any reaſon for relying upon theſe reports, which are contradictory, many of them even to refutation. Sir WILLIAM DAVENANT attempted ſome kind of theatrical exhibition, a ſhort time before the Reſtoration, at Rutland Houſe; and when the kingdom began to feel a glow of hope from the preparations of MONK, the ſcattered remains of the players began to collect themſelves together.

At this time RHODES, a bookſeller, who had been wardrobe keeper to the company at Blackfriers, boldly fitted up the Cockpit at Drury Lane; and, in addition to thoſe whoſe names we have already ſeen, retained BETTERTON, and KYNASTON, who had both been his apprentices.

The theatrical ſtandard was now hoiſted, and another company ſoon began to form at the Red Bull, and as this was during the ſhort period between the death of CROMWELL and the Reſtoration, making about two years, it was very unlikely they met with any material ſucceſs, for the kingdom had not ſufficient leiſure to pay them much attention.

It is, however, but fair to allow that they laid the foundation of what happened afterwards; and by having collected and digeſted ſomething like a regular plan, they were better prepared for action when a real opportunity took place; for RHODES's company with ſome additional actors compoſed that ſet who performed under ſir WILLIAM DAVENANT's patent; and the other made up the company of KILLIGREW.

It will be little neceſſary to attempt further proof that the theatre began to decline ſo early as PRYNNE's attack on it in 1633, and that of courſe no authors of any celebrity were or could be induced to aſſiſt it materially with their labours. This declenſion augmented gradually till 1660; when all impediments being removed, when the players, and many of the authors, being ready to reſume their functions, when it was not only the wiſh but

the intereſt of the whole nation to laugh away the gloom in which it had been involved, two theatres were immediately eſtabliſhed, one by virtue of a patent granted to ſir WILLIAM DAVENANT, and another veſting the ſame right in HENRY KILLIGREW, both grants being for ever.

CHAP. II.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE THEATRE AT THE RESTORATION.

If the merit of Shakespear and his cotemporaries maintained at leaſt eight theatres at a time, without the advantages of ſcenes or actreſſes, one introduced to attract the view, and the other to charm the ſenſes, there clearly muſt have been a deplorable deficency in the dramatic productions at the Reſtoration; when two theatres at a time made ſo indifferent a ſhift to get on, that in order to give ſtrength to their performances they united; and thus all the dramatic merit of the kingdom was concentrated in one company.

The ſteps that led to this union, which was not diſſolved till ſeven years after the Revolution, it will be now neceſſary to trace. Under the patent granted to Killigrew, the actors were denominated the king's ſervants, and performed at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane; ſir William

DAVENANT's company were called the Duke's Servants, and they performed firſt at Lincoln Inn Fields, and afterwards at the Duke's theatre in Dorſet Gardens.

About ten of the king's company were on his majeſty's houſehold eſtabliſhment. They were allowed ſcarlet cloth and lace for their uniform, and were ſtyled by the Lord Chamberlain, Gentlemen of the Grand Chamber. This diſtinction does not, however, appear to have been extended to the Duke's company. Both were greatly reſpected and carreſſed at court, where, as well as at their reſpective theatres, they frequently performed in the preſence of the royal family and the nobility.

Of ſo much conſequence were they conſidered, and of ſuch import to the ſtate appeared their eſtabliſhments, that the code of theatrical regulations, which we have ſeen iſſued by the command of LOUIS the fourteenth, and which deſerves every commendation, ſeems if it had been copied from that of the Engliſh companies; for the court took cognizance of their private government; and whenever there were any diſputes, either the king, or the duke, in perſon, condeſcended to decide on them.

But neither the renovation of the theatre after

ſo long an interdiction, the ſcenes, or the actreſſes, were able to ſatisfy the public without having recourſe to SHAKESPEAR; whoſe plays, to prevent all poſſibility of diſcontent, as well as ſeveral of JONSON's productions, and alſo MASSINGER's and FLETCHER's were in the moſt ſcrupulous and impartial manner divided between them; for it was a ſtrict ſtanding regulation that no play performed at one houſe ſhould be acted at the other.

As theſe plays were choſen in ſuch a manner as anſwered the beſt purpoſes of both companies, the court not only ratified the choice but applauded their good ſenſe in ſteering ſo impartially clear of each other. Thus while HART was celebrated in Othello, BETTERTON was famous in Hamlet.

I know not if this may be called a prudent method; for, though too much emulation leads to ſatiety, yet victory is gained by nobly ſtruggling, and compariſon is the criterion of excellence. At any rate is was not adopted by them to any good purpoſe; for DAVENANT finding his company weaken in the public eſtimation, introduced what was then and is at this moment the diſgrace and reproach of the theatre *.

* It cannot be ſuppoſed that I mean to advance any thing like an

Operas and maſques took place of tragedies and comedies, and to PYSCHE and CIRCE yielded CLEOPATRA and ROSALIND. To ſee and to hear are one thing, and to think and to judge another, and nothing could more completely verify the truth of this then what had happened to the king's company upon DAVENANT's bringing forward theſe auxiliary helps; for, though they were compoſed of performers much ſuperior to thoſe of the other, they

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aſſertion that ornament and ſcenery are not a very decorous and proper appendage to the theatre. Nothing but the extraordinary merit which we have examined both in authors and actors could poſſibly have kept up the ſtage to ſuch a pitch of reputation as we have ſeen it in, unaſſiſted as it was by theſe advantages; and even the admirable productions of SHAKESPEAR muſt naturally have received an augmented brilliancy from this auxiliary embelliſhment, not that they have altogether been ſo expenſive as a ſingle pantomime. I only reſerve to myſelf a right to blame thoſe innovations in this way which have prevailed to the injury of the drama, and ſhook the fair pretenſions of tragedy and comedy to the firſt rank in the theatre. Go for maſques, go for operas, go for ſpectacles if you will; let painting and muſic, thoſe becoming attendants on poetry, aid the meritorious labours of their lovely ſiſter; but let them keep within their own province. Let us have magic and fairy land, and let fairies bring about theſe transformations to the belief of which our minds are accommodated: but do not ſuffer ſtuffed elephants, paſteboard lyons, and leathern tygers to train the car of a real hero. Let us remember that theſe tricks were borrowed from our fantaſtic neighbours the French; and that, even in FRANCE, CORNEILLE with all his reputation never recovered the kick that was given to it by the neceſſity he was under of courting an auxiliary in the Flying Horſe.

inſtantly experienced the moſt cold and mortifying neglect, while the houſes and the coffers of the other houſe were completely filled; nor did they ever perfectly recover their eſtimation with the public, nor at all till they procured ſcenery and decorations from FRANCE and attacked their opponents with their own weapons.

Another advantage which the ſtage now began to boaſt was not only evidently neceſſary but perfectly rational. BURT, CLUN, HART, HAMMERTON, and KYNASTON, had hitherto been famous for performing female characters, and their reputation is very highly ſpoken of; but, as ſoon as Mrs. SAUNDERS, who afterwards married BETTERTON, and Mrs. DAVENPORT began to appear, and theſe were followed by others of the names of DAVIES, LONG, GIBBS, NORRIS, HOLDEN, and JENNINGS, the theatre ſeem to rennovate in earneſt, and ſcenes of tenderneſs, at which every audience muſt before have materially revolted, received now an additional force and energy by being graced with the real attractions of female beauty and feminine delicacy *.

* There was a clauſe, ſays an author, in one of theſe patents, but no doubt it was in both, which ran thus: "That whereas the "womens' parts in plays have hitherto been acted by men in the

In ſpight of all the precautions that had been taken by the king and the duke of YORK to prevent theatrical diſputes this introduction of foreign mercenaries preſently introduced alſo cabals and intrigues. Engliſhmen were not very well pleaſed at that inſolence which they experienced from Frenchmen, or that nature and SHAKESPEAR ſhould yield to a *contre tems*, or an *entrechat* *.

" habits of women, at which ſome have taken offence, we do permit " and give leave, for the time to come, that all womens' parts be " acted by women."

* A picture of thoſe times is given in pretty lively colours by an author who ſeems to have known them well. He ſays, " that " though the town at the time of SHAKESPEAR was not by many " degrees ſo populous as then," meaning the reign of CHARLES the ſecond, " yet as better order was kept among thoſe who frequented " plays their ſucceſs was more regular, and they themſelves as well " as their productions were more reſpected; for," ſays he, " as " there was better order kept among the company that came, many " people thought a play an innocent diverſion for an idle hour or " two, the plays themſelves being then more inſtructive and moral: " whereas of late the playhouſes are ſo extremely peſtered with " vizard maſks, and their trade occaſioning continual quarrels and " and abuſes, that many of the more civilized part of the town are " uneaſy in the company, and ſhun the theatre as they would a houſe " of ſcandal. It is an argument of the worth of the plays and " players of the laſt age, and eaſily inferred that they were much be- " yond ours in this, to conſider that they could ſupport themſelves " merely from their own merit, the weight of the matter, and the " goodneſs of the action, without ſcenes or machines; whereas the " preſent plays, with all their ſhow, can hardly draw an audience,

This was certainly the moment to attempt innovation with ſucceſs. A people who, in proportion as they had emancipated from gloom and ſadneſs, were now plunging into every pleaſure, even to unbridled licentiouſneſs, were exactly the objects to be played on by preſuming, cunning, and needy foreigners. Spectacle was the word; and, ſo completely did it prevail that at length the theatres themſelves, yielding to the ſuperior attractions of the puppet ſhew in Saliſbury Court, were obliged to petition in the ſame manner as TERENCE complained in his time of the rope dancers in ROME.

In the midſt of theſe contentions, the public pleaſures of the people were ſuſpended by their public calamities. The plague and the fire of LONDON cauſed a ſuppreſſion of all amuſements for eighteen months.

Theſe events, however, having paſſed away as every calamity in that reign did like a cloud in April, the ſun of pleaſure and voluptuouſneſs ſhone brighter than ever. New entertainments were invented, new auxiliaries called in, and this is the time when, as VOLTAIRE tells us, CAMBERT came

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" unleſs there be the additional invitation of a ſignior FIDELI, a " monſieur l'ABBE or ſuch ſome foreign regale expreſſed in the " bills."

over and "performed his deteſtable muſic to the "Engliſh, who thought it excellent."

As it has been a good deal contended that decorations and ſcenes were not introduced on the Engliſh ſtage till after the events of the plague and the fire, it is worth while to notice that this cannot be the truth, but that it is exactly as I have here ſtated. Sir WILLIAM DAVENANT was with the king in FRANCE, ſo was KILLIGREW, and there cannot be a doubt but they availed themſelves of every fanciful dramatic decoration they ſaw there; for, though they had not at that time arrived to CORELILLE'S flying horſe, the freaks of PERRIN, which, as we have ſeen, were the ruin of the marquis de SOURDEAC, muſt no doubt have attracted the notice of CHARLES, and his followers; but ſtronger circumſtance puts the matter out of doubt; for ſir WILLIAM DAVENANT did not live above a year and a half after the fire of LONDON, in which ſhort period it would have been impoſſible to have carried ſuch an improvement to any degree of perfection.

Leſt the circumſtance eſcape me I muſt here beg that the reader will not confound the idea of THOMAS KILLIGREW with KILLIGREW the patentee. The firſt was a man of wit, and an excellent companion for the king and ROCHESTER,

and it was upon this account that it has been ſuppoſed in general that to him the patent was granted as manager of the king's company. This, however, certainly was not the caſe, for all the authors agree that it was given to HENRY KILLIGREW, and there is no doubt but that the patent itſelf would bear out this fact, although it is extremely difficult to aſcertain the real perſon after all; for we know of no HENRY KILLIGREW but doctor HENRY, who was the brother of THOMAS, and a year younger than that famous wit, whereas the patent was made out to HENRY KILLIGREW, eſquire.

It is certainly true that doctor HENRY KILLIGREW was a man of brilliant talents, that he wrote a play, and that he was father of that Mrs. ANNE KILLIGREW on whom DRYDEN wrote a celebrated and beautiful elegy; and if it were not for the palpable miſnomer, and alſo that not a ſyllable has been hinted of the circumſtance by his numerous biographers, it would really be within likelihood that he was the perſon alluded to; for HART was the acting manager in the king's company, and BETTERTON in the duke's, ſo that KILLIGREW and DAVENANT muſt be conſidered only as proprietors.

The truth of this buſineſs will, perhaps, never

be known, which is indeed more extraordinary than material; but the reaſon ſeems to be this. When the two companies in 1684 united, at which time the KILLIGREW, whoever he was, had perhaps died or withdrawn from the ſcheme, for by this time there were ſtrange alterations, the plays were performed under ſir WILLIAM DAVENANT's patent which deſcended as regularly as a perſonal eſtate; having been bequeathed to doctor CHARLES DAVENANT, by him aſſigned to his brother ALEXANDER, who ſold his intereſt in it to CHRISTOPHER RICH, a lawyer; from him it came to his ſon, who left it to his four daughters, of whom it was purchaſed by Mr. COLMAN and his friends, and it has never been denied that, with this patent and this intereſt, deſcended alſo the dormant patent of KILLIGREW.

In a word, among all the hiſtories, of all the KILLIGREWS, we do not find a ſingle ſyllable that directs us to the knowledge of which of them poſſeſſed the patent; ſo that the matter muſt be left to the enquiry of the reader, who may, perhaps, not think the diſcovery worth the pains.

Before ſir WILLIAM DAVENANT died, he began the theatre in Dorſet Garden, but did not live to ſee it finiſhed. It was opened in November, 1671, and on the following January, Drury Lane,

belonging to the king's company, was burnt down together with more than fifty houſes. Sir CHRISTOPHER WREN was employed to renovate this phœnix; but there were ſo many directors and dictators that he left the managers, who had by this time began to increaſe in number, and of courſe in oppoſition, to wrangle the matter out together; in conſequence of which his whole plan was mutilated and ruined, and every convenience and accommodation, intended by him for the advantage of the public and the performers, ſpoiled and deſtroyed. It was, however, rebuilt and opened on the 26th of March, 1674.

Dorſet Garden, however, by means of ſhew and parade, obtained a complete victory over Drury Lane, nature, and common ſenſe. This induced the king's company, who were ſeverely galled at ſuch unmerited preference, to attempt at many expedients to revenge themſelves; and, among the reſt, authors were employed to parody and turn into ridicule the ſpectacles of the other houſe; which, as they could not excel them in ſplendour and ſhew, for otherwiſe the more nonſenſe the better, not only rendered all their attempts abortive, but fixed an indelible ſtigma upon them for having malevolently dared to queſtion the jugdment of the public.

It has, by ſome of the writers on the ſtage, been

mentioned that BETTERTON belonged to the king's company; and, when ſir WILLIAM DAVENANT produced ſcenes, that he went over to FRANCE to procure others more ſplendid in order to oppoſe him; nay, ſome will have it that BETTERTON produced all the ſcenes. The fact is, BETTERTON went to FRANCE, at the expreſs command of the king, to try, by a review of the French theatre, to add every poſſible improvement to the Engliſh; ſo that theſe ſcenes and decorations, which were really after the fire of LONDON, improved the duke's theatre ſo materially, that it greatly contributed to the downfall of their opponents.

We have here to lament that BETTERTON, whoſe own reputation was ſurely much more involved with that of SHAKESPEAR, than ſignor FIDELE, of whom LANGBAINE very properly ſpeaks ſo contemptuouſly, could ſo far condeſcend to injure the real intereſt of the theatre as to become an encourager of this folly; but we have ſeen the beſt actors and the wiſeſt managers bend to the faſhion of the times, and however reprehenſible might be the conduct of BETTERTON, the abſurdity of his ſucceſſors has left him little to bluſh at.

Though the performers at KILLIGREW's theatre had been acknowledged upon the whole as the beſt,

another reaſon why BETTERTON was ſuppoſed to have been one of them, they, about this time, dwindled conſiderably. Some had quitted the ſtage, ſome had died, and the remainder were old and infirm. It was at this favourable moment that BETTERTON, full of anxiety to provide comfortably for his comrades, propoſed to unite the theatres, which union was at length effected. They now performed by the title of the king's ſervants under ſir WILLIAM DAVENANT's patent, and after this time the patent of KILLIGREW does not ſeem to have been called into action.

HART ſoon after this retired, and MOHUN died; and now the theatre, inſtead of bringing a number of general intereſts into one point of view, grew diſtracted with its inteſtine broils. The particulars of theſe, however, we are not yet ripe for; I ſhall, therefore, leave the ſtage for the preſent, to examine into the merits of thoſe men by whom it became celebrated.

CHAP. III.

DAVENANT, SHIRLEY, AND RANDOLPH.

As the authors now became not only more numerous but more generally known, it will be ſufficient for me to detail the moſt material particulars relative to them that I have been able to collect. Men of conſiderable talents certainly lived in the reign of CHARLES the ſecond, one of them may with juſtice be called our greateſt poet, but the air of Engliſh taſte at that time was too groſs, too deleterious for the exiſtence of refined unadulterated wit, the inſtructor of morality, and the friend of virtue. Brutal and licentious jeſts aſſumed the whole dominion of letters; flattery was a virtue, decency a reproach; and the ſureſt way of procuring favour and protection was to proſtitute thoſe endowments which were intended by nature and reaſon to delight and inſtruct mankind.

Sir WILLIAM DAVENANT, to whoſe induſtry

and perſeverence, the ſtage has many obligations, led a life chequered with various fortunes. He was the ſon of JOHN DAVENANT, a conſiderable vintner, who kept the Crown at OXFORD; and, as SHAKESPEAR very frequently called there in his journey from LONDON to WARWICKSHIRE, a curious report has prevailed that having been pleaſed to ſhew great attention to the young vintner when a child, ſir WILLIAM owed not only his ſucceſs to our great bard's inſtructions, but his being to his gallantry.

Other circumſtances were adduced to corroborate this report, and among them it was ſaid that SHAKESPEAR was his godfather, and that he was chriſtened WILLIAM. Nay, he was ſaid to reſemble him very ſtrongly in every feature, but particularly about the noſe; but this fact was afterwards left undecided, for ſir WILLIAM, having unfortunately loſt his noſe, that evidence of SHAKESPEAR's incontinence was removed out of the way.

This report, however, has never been credited, which as it was invidious is rather wonderful, for it has been decided that Mrs. DAVENANT was a woman of unblemiſhed reputation, and that all SHAKESPEAR's civility and attention were no more

than a tribute of friendſhip and reſpect to her huſband, for whom he had a high opinion and regard.

In whatever way we conſider this gentleman's life, ſomething that beſpeaks extraordinary talents will be found in it. His genius ſoaring above the trammels of the univerſity, he quitted it very early and went to FRANCE in the ſuite of the ducheſs of RICHMOND; afterwards he was retained by that unfortunate lord BROOK, whoſe life we have ſeen, and whoſe cruel death left our poet without a patron.

He now turned his mind to literature; and, when JONSON died, became a ſucceſsful candidate againſt MAY for the vacant laurel. This trait of favour and attention from the king he never forgot, for when the troubles began he artfully and ſucceſsfully ſtirred up the people in his behalf, and in conſequence of his loyal conduct, which was followed up by great perſonal bravery, he received the honour of knighthood on the field of battle at the ſiege of GLOCESTER.

He contined firmly and honourably devoted to the king, and was at length taken priſoner and con-

fined in COWES caſtle; but nothing could conquer that firmneſs which was the marking feature of his character. So far from his being appalled with the proſpect of death which ſeemed to look him full in the face, he worked on his celebrated poem of *Gondibert*, two books of which he had written in FRANCE. At length two aldermen of YORK towards whom he had conducted himſelf with the trueſt clemency when they were priſoners and in his power, exerted their influence to ſave him, and he was ſoon after at large.

We have ſeen that at the Reſtoration he became manager of the duke of YORK's company; I ſhall, therefore, examine into the merits of thoſe dramatic pieces which, previous to that event, at, and after it, gave his name a conſiderable conſequence as a dramatic writer. As theſe pieces, however, were in general rather fitted to the ſtage than written for it, and as, in conſequence, they are none of them upon the liſt of acting plays, the intelligence we get concerning them is very blind and uncertain; and, were it not for LANGBAINE, with whom DAVENANT ſeems to have been a great favourite, we ſhould be almoſt in the dark upon this ſubject.

Albovine, King of the Lombards, bears date 1629. It is doubtful at what place this play was performed,

but it is taken from a novel by BANDELLO, and was dedicated to the duke of SOMERSET, and the dedication was followed up by eight copies of commendatory verſes.

Cruel Brother, 1730, ſaid to have been performed at Blackfriers, but we know nothing of either its origin or ſucceſs. The *Juſt Italian*, 1730, of this play there is no further account than that it was performed at Blackfriers and introduced by verſes written by HOPKINS and CAREW. The *Temple of Love*, 1634. Let it be remembered that I vouch for no dates between 1633 and 1660. This was a maſque and contradicts the account that ſcenes were not known till the Reſtoration, for the author himſelf has theſe words: "This maſque, for the "invention, variety of ſcenes, aparitions and rich-"neſs of habits, was generally approved to be one "of the moſt magnificent that had been done in "ENGLAND." The fact is ſcenes were known before, for they were introduced by INIGO JONES; but they were too expenſive to be exhibited any where but at court.

Triumphs of the Prince d'Amour, was another piece of the ſame kind, the muſic was compoſed by HENRY and WILLIAM LAWES. The *Platonic Lovers*, 1636, performed at Blackfriers. Very little

is ſaid about this piece, and it is probable that its ſucceſs was very indifferent, for it was not printed ſingly but waited for a play called The *Wits* to induce its ſale.

The *Wits* performed at Blackfriers in the ſame year. This play, which was taken from BEAUMONT and FLETCHER's *Wit at ſeveral Weapons*, had conſiderable ſucceſs, and was afterwards revived at the duke's theatre. It is highly complimented by CAREW; *Britannia Triumphant*, and *Salmacida Spolia*, were maſques. The *Unfortunate Lovers*, was a tragedy, ſo was *Love and Honour*, which laſt was performed with good ſucceſs.

Theſe pieces, whatever was the exact time of their firſt appearance, are all that DAVENANT produced till 1656, at which time, as we have ſeen, he got poſſeſſion of Rutland Houſe, where he contrived a ſpectacle by declamation, as he calls it, after the manner of the ancients, and afterwards he brought out the *Siege of Rhodes* there, which was certainly the firſt attempt to introduce ſcenes into a common theatre, for the title runs thus:

"The *Siege of Rhodes*, made a repreſentation
"by the art of perſpective in ſcenes, and the ſtory

" ſung in recitative muſic, at the back part of Rut-
" land Houſe, in the upper end of Alderſgate Street,
" LONDON, 1656." With this play DAVENANT opened his theatre after the Reſtoration, and it was warmly applauded. The event happened in the reign of SOLYMAN the ſecond, and the ſtory is well calculated to be conveyed through the medium of ſcenery and decoration.

The *Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru*, and The *Hiſtory of Sir Francis Drake*, were pieces performed at the Cockpit in 1658, and expreſſed, as it was termed, by inſtrumental and vocal muſic. Theſe plays might have been ſuffered but they were not, properly ſpeaking, permitted, and the accounts are that they would not have been ſuffered at all had not OLIVER CROMWELL in the firſt of them found ſomething that pleaſed him wonderfully; for that it gave him a clue to atchieve ſome conqueſts that he had meditated againſt PERU himſelf. This is a ſtrange aſſertion, and therefore I adviſe my readers to believe as much of it as reflection permits them to credit.

The *Rivals*, performed in 1668, is little more than attributed to DAVENANT. It was performed at his theatre, and is merely an alteration of FLETCHER's *Noble Kinſmen*. The *Man's the Maſter*,

1669, is exactly the ſubject of SCARRON's *Jodelet*, and a mixture of *L'Heritier Ridicule*, and this will ſhew that DAVENANT was determined to convince the public he was a good purveyor for their pleaſures.

The *Fair Favourite*, a tragi comedy, 1673. The ſucceſs of this piece is not known, but *Law againſt Lovers* became very popular, and no wonder, for it was made up of SHAKESPEAR's *Meaſure for Meaſure*, and *Much ado about Nothing*. DAVENANT however has not done any ſervice to either of theſe plays, and, as if he had not mutilated them enough by cutting them into one, he has affected to poliſh the language. In ſhort it ſucceeded, which was natural enough, for the audience were glad to ſee the reſemblance of SHAKESPEAR in any dreſs.

News from Plymouth, 1673, according to LANGBAINE, was performed with good ſucceſs. *A Playhouſe to Let*, is a ſtrange farago, intended for no other purpoſe than to gather up all thoſe materials which were performed by ſtealth in the time of CROMWELL. Theſe toſſed up with a kind of an introductory firſt act, make an entertainment certainly full of variety but as certainly full of abſurdity.

To throw with ſucceſs MOLIERE's *Cocu Ima-*

ginaire, The *Hiſtory of Sir Francis Drake*, The *Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru*, and The *Actions of Cæſar, Antony and Cleopatra*, into one play is as ſtrong an inſtance of an author's courage and the forbearance of an audience as I believe can be adduced; but to ſuch reputation were muſic and ſcenery arrived that the abſurder the vehicle the higher the admiration; for, beſides the incomprehenſible CAMBERT, they by this time began to have a taſte for LULLY.

The next piece of this author called The *Siege*, is ſo little remembered that no account can be gathered either of its merit or its ſucceſs. Its date is 1673, ſo is that of another piece called *Diſtreſſes*, of which play we know as little as to its public celebrity. An alteration of *Macbeth* adapted to the ſpirit of the times, and decorated with ſcenery and muſic, was the laſt attempt of this author, which bears the date of 1674; and, at ſome time in his life, he altered the *Tempeſt*, that it might have the ſame ſtage advantages, in conjunction with DRYDEN.

From theſe circumſtances it appears, from the plays themſelves, that their dates were at the time they were printed, and their ſucceſs ſuch as might be expected from the labours of a man whoſe ſtudy

was rather to keep a pleaſing variety for the ſtage, as a manager, than to become a candidate for public fame as an author; and this will apply, trace the merit of DAVENANT how you may; for he wrote well, ſtrong and readily; the ſterling materials, therefore, that were neceſſary to work up plays when they were obliged to go alone were uſeleſs now they were either dandled or trained in leading ſtrings; and nothing can prove this more forcibly than a peruſal of thoſe of his plays that are extant, which are none of them by any means regular, and which are fitted to the ſtage even more haſtily and ſlovenly than thoſe of DRYDEN.

DAVENANT nevertheleſs wrote ſenſibly and meritoriouſly, but his beſt talents were not for the ſtage, and there is more intrinſic value in his *Gondibert* than all his dramatic productions put together. DRYDEN ſpeaks of him as one who had a quick fancy, and an imagination equal to the accompliſhment of every thing he projected. He ſays that no ſubject could be propoſed to him on which he would not ſuddenly produce a thought extremely pleaſant and ſurprizing. WALLER, COWLEY, and HOBBS, wrote alſo highly in favour of his works. In ſhort, he was a man of ſtrong intellects, and extremely proper for the ſituation he held; which would have been manifeſt more to his honour had

not a falſe taſte anſwered his purpoſe, and, therefore, he would have been his own worldly enemy to have had recourſe to real taſte, but at laſt with all his ingenuity he would have cut but an indifferent figure by the ſide of even the ſecond rate claſs of dramatic poets in the reign of JAMES the firſt, who had nothing to depend upon but intrinſic merit.

SHIRLEY was a much better dramatic writer than ſir WILLIAM DAVENANT; which opinion ſome of his ſucceſſors have ſo ſteadily held that without ſcruple, in the fond imagination that they were following the dictates of their own fancy, they have followed him word for word. Mrs. BEHN, BULLOCK, and FOOTE, have taken materials from him; and even DRYDEN has given no mean account of him.

SHIRLEY, like WEBSTER was a writer of plays, and a ſchoolmaſter, but he had much more merit at either profeſſion. According as the times were peaceable or turbulent, he purſued one or the other of theſe occupations. Some of his plays were produced ſoon after the death of JAMES the firſt, but their ſucceſs does not appear to have been equal to their merit till they were brought forward at the Reſtoration. He did not, however, live long enough to reap any ſolid advantages from this revival of his

reputation; for, having been burnt out with his family at the dreadful fire in 1666, both he and his wife were ſo ſeized with terror at the ſhocking event that they died within the ſpace of four and twenty hours, and were buried in the ſame grave.

SHIRLEY's dramatic works are ſaid to have been printed according to the following dates. The *Wedding*, 1629, was performed at the Phœnix. This play is well ſpoken of, and was twice revived with ſucceſs. The *Grateful Servant*, 1630, which is ſaid to have been greatly applauded, was accompanied by eight copies of verſes, two of them written in Latin. This comedy was revived twice, but its reception was not perhaps equal to SHIRLEY's expectation, for he took the principal circumſtance in it to aſſiſt him in the plot of the *Humourous Courtier*.

The *School of Compliment*, though brought out third was written firſt. Its date is 1631, and it does not ſeem to have been ſo ſucceſsful as either of the others. The *Changes*, 1632, was greatly ſucceſsful, both during the author's life time and after his death, till DRYDEN took a principal circumſtance into his *Maiden Queen;* which, not being liked as he introduced it, the innocent, as we fre-

quently ſee in life, ſuffered for being in company with the guilty.

Contention for Honour and Riches, and The *Triumph of Peace*, were maſques, and had ſucceſs through the medium of decoration. The *Witty Fair One*, 1633, has merit. but its reception did not anſwer the author's hopes or expectations. Of the *Bird in the Cage*, alſo in 1633, we have different reports. It had great ſucceſs on the ſtage, and was revived with the higheſt approbation on its being printed, not only on account of the play itſelf but an ironical dedication to the famous PRYNNE, whoſe attack on the theatre we have gone through the hiſtory of. It is a ſingular ſtory and ſtrangely conducted, but thoſe who read it will find in it ſome ſterling materials.

The *Traytor*, which is little more than a judicious alteration of a piece under the ſame title written by one RIVERS, a Jeſuit, was performed in 1635, and revived in 1692, as well as twenty-ſix years afterwards with alterations by BULLOCK, but it never did much; indeed tragedy was not the forte of SHIRLEY.

The *Lady of Pleaſure*, 1637. This play is not

remarkable for any ſtriking merit, for on the contrary it is full of indecency; but this was the vice of the times, and SHIRLEY, not content with introducing the circumſtance of a man's enjoying the perſon of a young lady and fancying her the devil, in his *Grateful Servant*, which, as we have ſeen, was recommended by eight copies of verſes, has brought it forward again in this piece. Mrs. BEHN, however, anxious to make her own ſex as knowing as poſſible, has again haſhed up this turtle with the addition of a little green fat in her play of the *Lucky Chance*.

The *Young Admiral*, 1637, performed at a private houſe in Drury Lane, is a play of very mediocre pretentions. The *Example*, ſame year. This is a tragi comedy as well as the laſt, and like that it has but a faint title to commendation. *Hyde Park*, 1637 again. We get at SHIRLEY's genuis beſt when we get to his comedies. This play, though far from a perfect performance, has many flaſhes of excellent humour, but it is irregular and undramatic; and, like almoſt the whole of this author's works, requires to be regulated by a maſterly hand. In ſhort, there is too much of FLETCHER about SHIRLEY to enſure him a permanent reputation.

His next comedy, The *Gameſter*, is a ſtrong

proof of this. The plot, though perfectly natural, is full of perplexity, but there are parts of it that would do credit to any author. The characters are ſtrong, and the moral is intereſting. This play was altered by CHARLES JOHNSON, and called The *Wife's Relief*, but his language does not mix well with SHIRLEY's. GARRICK, who better underſtood the ſtage, brought it forward under the title of The *Gameſters*, but he omitted certainly the two ſtrongeſt written ſcenes in the whole play, and thus it has never yet been properly altered; if it were to be, there can be no doubt but it would keep a reſpectable ſtand among the ſtock liſt.

We next find two tragi-comedies, one called The *Royal Maſter*, and the other The *Duke's Miſtreſs*. The firſt had ten copies of complimentry verſes perfixed to it, though it had a ſhort exiſtence, and the other ſneaked out of the world without being noticed at all. The *Maid's Revenge* is ſaid to have been SHIRLEY's ſecond play, and indeed there is every appearance of it, for it is a very puerile performance. *Chabot, Admiral of France*, is a work of but little merit. Theſe four laſt plays bear date 1638.

The *Ball*. A play in which SHIRLEY is ſaid to have been aſſiſted by GEORGE CHAPMAN. *Arcadia*. This play is founded on ſir PHILIP SIDNEY's *Ar-*

cadia, a poem incapable of being dramatized; and, as if it was not dull and perplexed enough in SHIRLEY's attempt to bring it on the ſtage, it has been ſince done into a tragedy by a Mr. MACNAMARA MORGAN; and though ſtuffed with the moſt contemptible mixture of puerility and bombaſt, had ſucceſs through the acting of BARRY and Miſs NOSSITER.

The *Humourous Courtier* was performed with good ſucceſs. Whoever ſearches for SHIRLEY's merit will find it in comedy. The *Opportunity*. There is a reſemblance in this play of *Meaſure for Meaſure*, and other ſtories. It is not the beſt play of this author, but it is far from a bad one.

St. Patrick for Ireland is a hiſtorical play; but it only contains a part of the ſtory, and is in other reſpects a looſe and unintereſting performance. In *Love's Cruelty*, a tragedy, there is not much to boaſt of. The ſtrange circumſtance of a huſband's concealing his wife's adultery is too revolting. The *Conſtant Maid* is a comedy that contains much pleaſantry, but there is very little novelty in the incidents or the author's management of them. The ſeven laſt pieces bear date 1640.

The *Coronation*, which was ſaid to have been

written ſingly by FLETCHER, is alſo dated 1640. SHIRLEY laid claim to it, and his claim was allowed. It is not very material, however, who wrote it, except for the merit of particular paſſages, for as a play it has not much to boaſt of. The *Triumph of Beauty* is a maſque, which was performed for the amuſement of ſome young noblemen. The ſubject is the *Judgment of Paris.*

The *Brothers.* This ſubject, which has been treated repeatedly ever ſince TERENCE, cannot fail to ſucceed according to the merit of the different authors who chooſe it; and, whether we inſtance this play, the *Squire of Alſatia*, *Tom Jones*, the *School for Scandal*, or any other of thoſe numerous productions, either plays or novels, into which the eſſence of this ſubject has been introduced, it muſt be conſidered as the moſt pardonable plagiary that can be, becauſe the intereſt is affecting and always in nature.

The *Siſters.* There are four or five French things, which have a reſemblance to this comedy. SHIRLEY'S play has merit in parts, but is not well hung together, and, therefore, the intereſt palls. The *Doubtful Heir* is another of thoſe mixtures of merit and defect which we perpetually find in this author. You always pity him for making FLETCHER

his model: The *Impoſtor* is fairly criticiſed by the ſame obſervation.

The *Cardinal* is a tragedy. Its ſucceſs we have no information of, but in the cloſet we eaſily diſcover what it ought to have been. It creates but little intereſt, and is upon the whole, in ſpight of ſome good writing, a very dull thing. One has ground to ſuſpect that many of theſe plays were not produced at the time they were ſaid to have been performed. We perceive this in the next play of this author, called The *Court Secret*, which was intended to have been performed but was interdicted.

Cupid and Death. This is a maſque, and every body knows that the ſubject muſt be the changing of their arrows. We are told that it was performed in March 26, 1653, but this can ſcarcely be credited, unleſs we can alſo believe that CROMWELL ſtrained a point to pleaſe the Portugueſe ambaſſador, before whom it is ſaid to have been repreſented. It is difficult to reconcile this however, eſpecially when we reflect that this was the very time the poor actors were ſo frequently hunted about and ſent to priſon. Looking further I find the date in another author 1658, and in LANGBAINE 1659.

The *Politician*, and The *Gentlemen of Venice*,

are tragi comedies and their dates 1658. In moſt of the accounts of them, they are pieces of inconſiderable merit. The firſt is taken from MONTGOMERY's *Urania*, and the other from *Don Quixote*. The *Contention of Ajax and Ulyſſes for the Armour of Achilles*, is a maſque, or interlude, written to ſerve ſome temporary purpoſe.

We have now *Honoria and Mammon* a comedy, date 1649, and *Andromana*, a tragedy, which make up all the works of SHIRLEY that have been printed. He is ſaid beſides to have written *St. Albans*, a tragedy, *Look to the Lady*, a comedy, and *Roſania, or Love's Victory*, a comedy, but theſe were never publiſhed. *Honoria and Mammon* is nothing more than the *Contention for Honour and Riches*, ſwelled from an interlude into a comedy, and *Andromana, or the Merchant's Wife*, is ſir PHILIP SIDNEY's *Arcadia*, taken up again to leſs purpoſe than when it was handled the firſt time.

Thus we have enumerated at leaſt the plays of SHIRLEY. To criticiſe them would require more room than can here be ſpared. His works, however, have been at different times, except the three laſt mentioned pieces, all publiſhed, but are difficult to be got at, though the eſſence of them will be found in other authors, which circumſtance

has made SHIRLEY a ſtrong ſupporter of the theatre, and there can be no doubt that, though all his plays appear to be written before the Reſtoration, they very materially, through the management of DAVENANT contributed to its reputation immediately after it; for his talents have been frequently a theme of admiration for the critics, and, had he not lived in a very diſcouraging time, inſtead of ſeeing his works pilfered and mutilated, we ſhould have had the ſatisfaction and he the credit of finding his name placed greatly above others who, with ſhallower pretentions, have been conſidered as better writers.

RANDOLPH was a writer of very extraordinary abilities. He was one of the very few in whom learning became no clog to genius, and this ſeems to have been becauſe in him the natural and acquired qualities were tempered by a moſt equitable mean in his judgement. I cannot comprehend that language can be more beautiful, more ſenſible, more keen, more juſt, than in many parts of the *Muſes Looking Glaſs*. It does not, however, appear, though RANDOLPH, for the ſpecimen we have of him, was perhaps the beſt poet between SPENCER and DRYDEN, that the drama was his true ſtyle of writing. His language was above common nature; it was ever elevated, ever ſoaring, and therefore its beſt

vehicle was rhime and meaſure. But let us look at his dramatic pieces, which are ſix in number.

Ariſtippus, a comedy, date 1630. This piece ſeems to have been written facecioufly to excuſe thoſe exceſſes to which RANDOLPH was indeed too fatally attached, for they killed him at the age of twenty-nine. It is called *Ariſtippus, or the Jovial Philoſopher, demonſtratively proving that quarts, pints, and pottles are ſometimes neceſſary authors in a ſcholar's library.* I think it very unlikely that this *Jeux d'eſprit*, though it was publiſhed, was ever performed. The *Conceited Pedlar*, was a mere bagatelle that accompanied the above play.

The *Jealous Lovers*, which is dated 1632, is ſaid to be the beſt of RANDOLPH's works. The writing is certainly not ſo maſterly as that of the *Muſes Looking Glaſs*, but taking it as a regular comedy there can be no doubt but the critics are right. He was the darling wit of the univerſity, the ſtudents delighted in performing this play themſelves, and almoſt every man of eminent genius wrote ſomething in praiſe of it.

Theſe panegyrics are too long to tranſcribe. The ſenſe of one of them is, that the *Jealous Lovers*

ought to be conſerved in ſome great library; that if, through chance or injury of time, ARISTOPHANES, PLAUTUS, and TERENCE ſhould be loſt to the world, their united merit might be recognized in this play; for ſays the panegyriſt thou haſt drawn the pander, the gull, the jealous lover, the doating father, the ſhark, the curſt wife. All theſe, ſays he, thou haſt

> So truly given in their own proper ſtyle
> As if thy active ſoul had dwelt a while
> In each man's body; and at length had ſeen
> How in their humours they themſelves demean.

The *Muſes Looking Glaſs*, date 1638. A ſingle objection lies againſt the admiſſion that this is one of the greateſt efforts of human genius, and even this objection is almoſt done away in the cloſet. The *Muſes Looking Glaſs*, which is called a comedy, is certainly nothing more than a collection of detached ſcenes which, though they have a laudable and moral tendency, grow cold from being declamatory and unimportant for want of a plot, to the denouement of which the characters ought to be impelled by one natural intereſt. In ſhort, this ſucceſſion of dialogues are conveyed to the audience through a grex, and therefore with the diſappearance of each character all concern ceaſes with the real auditor.

On this account the *Muſes Looking Glaſs* can never generally ſucceed. Nothing can be finer than the ſubtle variety of arguments by which COLAX reconciles diſcontent, fool hardineſs, cowardly fear, voluptuouſneſs, ſelf denial, avarice, prodigality, and the prodigious ſhades of vice and folly which this capable and diſcriminating author has introduced into his play; but if COLAX is tired with them and adminiſters to their vanity to get rid of them how much more muſt the audience cool, in ſpight of their wreſted admiration of thoſe charming arguments, which ſeem to pervade all the paſſions, and their diſtinctions, in human nature.

Invention was almoſt exhauſted in its praiſe, and among the efforts of its numerous admirers we find the following happy diſtich by WEST.

> Who looks within his clearer glaſs, will ſay
> At once, he wrote on ethic tract, and play.

Amyntas, or the Impoſſible Dowry, date 1638, has great beauty. It is replete with the beſt traits which diſtinguiſhed GUARINI, and TASSO, without the ſervile reſemblance of either. With ſimplicity, it is full of elevation; and, though correctly natural, it is highly dignified. In ſhort, it is one of the fineſt ſpecimens of paſtoral poetry in this language, and the ſubject is appropriate and intereſting; but not

being filled with a ſufficient variety of characters, and incidents, to give it life on the ſtage, it has never been revived with ſucceſs.

His laſt play was called *Hey for Honeſty, Down with Knavery*. This being only an ingenious tranſlation from the *Plutus* of ARISTOPHANES, it was too extravagant a buſineſs to ſucceed, had it been attempted, but there is reaſon to ſuppoſe it was never performed.

The works of this author, beautiful and correct as they are every where as writings, are by no means ſufficiently dramatic; and, therefore, they have furniſhed a large ſource of materials for thoſe who could not write ſo well but who could manage better. DODSLEY ſays with his uſual candour and frankneſs, at the ſame time that he confeſſes his obligations to RANDOLPH for his *Toyſhop*, the hint of which he took from the *Conceited Pedlar*, that "the "*Muſes Looking Glaſs* has been always eſteemed as "an excellent common place book to inſtruct dra-"matic authors in the art of drawing characters."

This holds good in a much ſtronger degree. No author for the quantity he wrote has been ſo pilfered as RANDOLPH, and no wonder. Where ſhould men find materials but at the fountain head?

'Tis univerſally allowed that there never was a writer more original. When his brother publiſhed his works in 1664, which ran through five editions, a friend, on reading them, wrote the following lines:

> With what an extaſy ſhall we behold
> This book? Which is no ghoſt of any old
> Worm eaten author: here's no jeſt, or hint,
> It had his head both for its ore, and mint.
> Were't not for ſome tranſlations, none could know
> Whether he had e'er looked in book or no.

In RANDOLPH the world certainly loſt an invaluable treaſure; for, if in the midſt of thoſe faſhionable exceſſes into which he ſo thoughtleſsly plunged, and which cut him off ſo early in life, he was able to produce ſo many ſterling and admirable proofs of great and extraordinary genius, particular learning, and general information; what might not have been expected from him had he lived to have matured ſuch talents, to have felt the honeſt pride derived from meritorious exertions, and a conſciouſneſs of the ſuperior dignity reſulting from the power and the gratification of conveying delight and inſtruction to mankind.

CHAP. IV.

MAY, BROME, MILTON, AND COWLEY.

BEFORE I examine the productions of DRYDEN and other dramatic authors, whoſe labours ſtretch beyond the Revolution, I ſhall go through all thoſe who finiſhed their career before that event; taking them by ſeniority either as to fame or the time in which they wrote.

MAY, who was, as we have ſeen, competitor with ſir WILLIAM DAVENANT for the laurel, was a man of no mean abilities. General poetry, however, and hiſtory, were more congenial to his talents than the ſtage. He ſeems to have manifeſted all the vexation of a diſappointed man from the moment he failed in his contention with ſir WILLIAM DAVENANT; for, after having been an accompliſhed and plyant courtier, out of mere picque and reſentment, he eſpouſed the republican cauſe without motive, or without principle; acting a part exactly

oppoſite to the conduct of DAVENANT, whoſe loyalty, and duty, have been the theme of every man's admiration.

Lord CLARENDON after commending his good qualities as a man, and extolling his merit as a poet and a hiſtorian, is forced into the following confeſſion: "Yet, to ſhew that pride and envy have "their influence upon the narroweſt minds, and "which have the greateſt ſemblance of humility, "though he had received much countenance, and "a very conſiderable donative from the king, upon "his majeſty's refuſing to give him a ſmall penſion, "which he had deſigned and promiſed to another "very ingenious perſon, whoſe qualities he thought "inferior to his own, he fell from his duty and all "his former friends, and proſtituted himſelf to the "vile office of celebrating the infamous acts of "thoſe who were in rebellion againſt the king; "which he did ſo meanly, that he ſeemed to all "men to have loſt his wits when he left his honeſty; "and ſhortly after died miſerable and neglected, "and deſerves to be forgotten."

His tranſlation of LUCAN's *Pharſalia*, and his own ſupplement of LUCAN, are allowed to be good poetry, and his hiſtory of RICHARD the ſecond, is

deſervedly celebrated. His plays, five in number, had conſiderable merit.

Antigone, a tragedy, date 1631. This play is borrowed from SOPHOCLES, SENECA, and STATIUS; and, though it has merit in the writing, is dull and heavy and too unwieldy to accommodate itſelf to action, and therefore pleaſes readers tolerably well, but hearers not at all.

The *Heir*, a comedy, dated 1633, has a great ſhare of merit. It was publiſhed by DODSLEY in his collection of old plays, and is certainly full of intereſting ſituation and ſtrong characteriſtic writing; but it is by no means a perfect play, nor can it be made ſo. The enmity of the two houſes, the ſtrange demand of the king that LEUCOTHOE ſhall yield to his deſires, and the conſtable, and the watch, who ſeize EUGENIO, are all ſtolen from SHAKESPEAR; but theſe plagiaries are coarſe caricatures, and what's worſe are introduced without a fair drift or motive.

The under plot is groſs and indelicate; and, though there is ſome whim in making SHALLOW, out of vanity and boaſting, take the diſgrace to himſelf of LUCY's being with child by him, though he knows he never had any criminal intercourſe with her; her being delivered of a pillow is failing rather

too near the wind. Upon the whole there is ſomething to admire in this play but chalk drawings from *Romeo and Juliet*, *Meaſure for Meaſure*, and *Much ado about Nothing*, and thoſe faint and without force, cannot poſſibly be conſidered as an admiſſible ſubſtitute for thoſe admirable pictures of nature and truth, which are ſo greatly ſuperior in the productions of our incomparable bard.

Agrippina, a tragedy, date 1628, is taken from XIPHILINUS, TACITUS, and SUETONIUS. The ſubject is unproductive and never has ſucceeded on any ſtage, notwithſtanding the various ways it has been attempted to be brought forward. MAY's effort is but weak, and therefore, though it was printed at three different periods, it has been but little known on the ſtage.

Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt, date 1654. In this tragedy MAY either to manifeſt his candour, or his reading, has given the names of ſix claſſical writers, from whoſe works he took this piece, beſides having followed DANIEL, and conſulted two or three others; yet with all theſe good materials, ſo true it is that too many cooks ſpoil the broth, he has not been able to produce a paſſable play.

The *Old Couple*, a comedy, date 1658, which

accompanies the *Heir* in DODSLEY's collection, is written to expoſe the vice of covetouſneſs. It abounds with ſingular and ludicrous circumſtances, and contains ſome pleaſantry and humour. There is ſomething well conceived in the circumſtance of turning the heart of EARTHWORM from avariciouſneſs to benevolence; but the mode is too ſudden for it cannot be in nature that rooted covetouſneſs ſhould find an inſtantaneous cure. As to the tricks that are introduced, firſt to perplex and afterwards to unravel the plot, they are trite and hackneyed and excite more curioſity than they gratify. If upon the whole, however, it were ſimplified it does not want requiſites to form a good comedy; but a bungler could not effect it, and a man of talents would not think it worth his while to make the trial.

PHILIPS and WINSTANTLY aſcribe to MAY two other plays; but it is not proved that one of them was ever ſeen, and it is proved beyond contradiction that the other was printed before MAY was born. This poet was a proof that FALSTAFF's obſervation, "fretting and grief puffs a man up like a "bladder," may be truth, for he lived a life of vexation and diſappointment, and was perpetually a prey to the irritability natural to it, yet he enjoyed

unconquerable health, and grew ſo immenſely fat that he was choaked with his night cap.

BROME, who was originally a menial ſervant of JONSON, had good ſenſe enough to avail himſelf of as much as would ſerve his purpoſe of thoſe dogmatic leſſons, which, in his oſtentation of wit his preceptor forced upon all thoſe who would liſten to them. JONSON uſed to brag that of all his pupils BROME had the moſt accommodating docility. His words are ſaid to have been that "BROME made a "very good uſe of the improvement he had ac-"quired during a long apprenticeſhip under ſo "ſkilful a maſter."

The beſt advantage BROME took of JONSON's leſſons was to ſtudy men and manners; for, as he had ſtrength of mind enough to invent his own plots, and good ſenſe enough to keep to comedy, which he felt to be his proper forte, he found that obſervation would anſwer his purpoſe, perhaps, better than reading. There ſeems alſo to have been another piece of cunning about him for which he ought to be commended. It was that, however he might feel himſelf equal to the taſk of writing plays, and therefore probably find it neceſſary to treaſure up materials for the undertaking, knowing and perhaps

fearing the irascible temper of JONSON, he took care not to set himself up as his rival to any formidable degree, for he produced but one play during the life time of his master.

This was the *Northern Lass*, 1632. It was commended by verses from JONSON and others, and is well spoken of. Indeed it is said to be one of the best of this author's plays, no one of which, to say truth, ever arrived to any very eminent degree of reputation. They all contain true character, sound language, and natural situation, and they create interest, but none of these requisites are given with sufficient force to effect the mind materially. This comedy was twice revived, the last time with the addition of songs composed by DANIEL PURCELL, and this seems to be what is wanting to give BROME consequence as a dramatic writer. For there is just enough plot and good dialogue in his comedies as might fill up the intervals between the songs of what we call a comic opera.

His next comedy is dated 1640. It is called The *Sparagus Garden*, and is of the complexion of the last; but it is even lighter; and, as it has never been revived with songs, it has been lost to the theatre for ought we can learn ever since the first season of its

repreſentation. *Antipodes*, ſame year, ſhared the ſame fate.

The *Jovial Crew* is dated 1652. This piece gives us a complete clue to judge of the merits of this author. It has been frequently revived, and it is in the recollection of many of the public, that embelliſhed with ſome ſweet muſic by ARNE, and performed with great ſtrength it had a conſiderable run at Covent Garden theatre, at which time the town received it as a production full of humour, whim, and pleaſantry; but it muſt be confeſſed, had it not been for that muſic, and that ſtrength, its pretentions are not very far above mediocrity, and after all, as we ſaw it then, it did not come from the hands of of BROME, but had been completely altered into a ballad opera by one ROOME, who was an undertaker for funerals as well as for ballad operas, and who, ſomehow or other, offended POPE and was therefore introduced into the *Dunciad.*

In the ſtate ROOME left the *Jovial Crew*, it was found by ſome theatrical amateurs, who improved it ſtill further, and it was not till it had received all this improvement that it came out at Covent Garden, at which time it was patronized by the celebrated and truly amiable ſir WILLIAM YOUNG, whoſe

heart was full of ſocial virtue, and whoſe philanthrophy and beneficence have been the theme of all the polite circles in the WEST INDIES and in ENGLAND.

The *Mad Couple well Matched*, 1653, had little ſucceſs with BROME; but having broadneſs enough in its humour to bear the title of The *Debauchee, or the Credulous Cuckold*, Mrs. BEHN caught at an opportunity ſo favourite to the bent of her genius, and brought it forward with ſome ſucceſs under that title. *Novella*, 1653, has a good character given it by LANGBAINE and others; but, though it has nature and intereſt to a certain degree, I cannot think with them that it exceeds many comedies of their time.

The *Court Beggar*, ſaid to have been performed in 1632, and printed 1653, is like almoſt every thing elſe of this author who ſometimes got beyond mediocrity but never arrived at excellence. The *City Wit*, 1653, The *Damoiſelle* ſame year, The *Qeeen's Exchange*, 1657, which was afterwards revived under the title of The *Royal Exchange*, and *the Engliſh Moor*, 1659, may be known by the ſame mode of deſcription.

The *Love Sick Court*, 1658, *Covent Garden*

Weeded, ſame year, *New Academy*, and The *Queen and Concubine*, make up the whole of this author's works, not one of which pieces will bear a high eulogium. In ſhort, we muſt conſider BROME as a creditable author, faithful to nature, and anxious to acquire meritorious praiſe, but all his productions are deficient in that ſtrength and force without which no production can maintain a permanent reputation on the ſtage.

The *Comus*, and *Samſon Agoniſtes*, of MILTON, give me a title to introduce that great man into this work, which I ſhould do to much ſtronger effect could my faint praiſe add the ſmalleſt luſtre to his ſplendid reputation; or, that accompliſhed, were not the happieſt effuſions the mind can conceive, or the pen tranſmit already anticipated by the delight of his numerous admirers.

It will be impoſſible here, even were my inclination ever ſo ſtrong to enquire into the variety of opinions that have been entertained by different writers of MILTON's public and private conduct, his ſentiments or their incentives, his actions or their motives. Whether his political diſquiſitions are to be aſcribed to principle or intereſt, his religious doctrines to piety or hypocricy, whether he lived in penury or proſperity, whether he "over-

" looked the milder excellence of ſuavity and ſoft-
" neſs and was a lion that had not ſkill in dandling
" the kid," or whether, " he was open and affable,
" and his converſation eaſy, chearful, and inſtruct-
" ive." Whether, in ſhort, according to one great man, " he bore his misfortunes with patience and " reſignation, and that, after he was blind, his three " daughters uſed to read to him;" or, according to " another, " that he was impatient of ſuffering, and " that his daughters could not read at all."

We have only to go over the different accounts of MILTON's life and character, and there is nothing contradictory but we muſt ſubmit to adknowledge. He was a catholic, he was a proteſtant, he was neither. He rejected prayer, and therefore did not admit religion, and yet in his *Paradiſe Loſt* he makes our firſt parents pray for a continuation of happineſs in a ſtate of innocence, and for a reſtoration of it after the fall.

As to his political opinions he is on all hands allowed to have been to blame, but in this he is as much excuſed as reprobated. If by one author we are told " that he was an acrimonious and ſurly re-
" publican, for that he hated all thoſe whom he was
" required to obey; that his predominant deſire was
" to deſtroy rather than eſtabliſh, and that he felt

" not ſo much the love of liberty as repugnance to " authority," all which would ſeem to prove that he was mad as well as blind. We are informed by another, " that his moral and religious character " were excellent but certainly puſhed too far; for " there were ſeaſons enough in his life when his " zeal carried both to a fanatical height, and when " he might be ſaid to have been mad with virtue " and religion," which if we allow it is not madneſs of the ſame colour with the other author's aſſertion.

Leaving thoſe matters and rejecting all enquiry whether MILTON was tall and well made, ſhort and thick, whether his favourite weapon in the field was the rapier or the back ſword, or his conſtant inſtrument in the cloſet was the organ or the theorbo, whether his muſe was coy at one ſeaſon and complying at another, whether, when he wrote, he took pen and ink like Mr. JOHNSON, or ſtewed prunes like Mr. BAYES; whether he was a baſhaw in his houſe and looked upon women with contempt; or whether he inſtructed and delighted them by the charms of his converſation; let us examine his literary merit and opinions.

Going into theſe as far as my circumſcribed plan will allow I ſhall not be very ſolicitous to induce the reader's belief that MILTON, though he might

very naturally ſet a high value on SPENCER and SHAKESPEAR could either conſider COWLEY a great writer, whoſe genius was totally diſſimilar to his own, or DRYDEN, whoſe ſoul was formed of materials extremely like that of MILTON, no writer at all.

Certainly MILTON had a high value for foreign authors as well ancient as modern, and he was qualified more to taſte their beauties than perhaps any Engliſhman of great genius that then exiſted; for he knew correctly moſt of the living and dead languages; but this would confirm in him a more competent power to decide on the merits of his countrymen, unleſs we can believe what has been inſinuated that he extolled COWLEY becauſe he was dead and there was no danger in him, and decried DRYDEN becauſe he was living and capable of proving a rival. Let us believe that his mind was too firm, and his ſentiments too ſublime to admit of ſuch unprincipled injuſtice, or ſuch pitiful fluctuation.

As every thing lyric is in its nature dramatic, dithyrambics having been the origin of the drama, and lyric poetry being, as MILTON expreſſes it, wedded to muſic, it will not be going out of my way

to ſpeak of *Lycidas*, *Il Penſeroſo*, and *L'Allegro*. To ſay truth, the metre of MILTON is every where muſical, which is not wonderful, for his father was a muſician, from whom he knew muſic himſelf, and at a proper time we ſhall ſee how uſeful he was to LAWES in the original compoſition of *Comus*, and it will not be an offence, I humbly preſume, to aſſert, though poets have written well who, according to the vulgar phraſe, have not been able to turn a tune, that ſhould, by accident, a muſical mind be grafted on a poetical one the combined effect, emanating from the ſame ideas, muſt neceſſarily be more forcible than were it to reſult from the colliſion of two different minds however congenial; for it is infallible, that the muſician muſt loſe ſome of the furor of the poet, and the poet of the muſician *.

* I knew a muſician of ſome eminence who, being engaged to compoſe muſic, like doers of periodical works, at ſo much per ſheet, the words to be provided or written by his employer, and knowing the impoſſibility of finding correſpondent expreſſions for the lines he had to ſet, for he might as well have compoſed a game at crambo, would conſtantly get the metre into his mind and invent a gavotte, or a jig, to ſuit it, and this muſt be done by a muſician of real genius; but all the muſical genuis upon earth could not do this by words in their nature truly lyric; by the poetry for inſtance of MILTON or DRYDEN. The aſſiſtance here muſt be mutual, for the expreſſion of the poetry points out the nature of the muſic requiſite for its appropriate decoration, and the muſic gathers a ſtrength and a beauty from the charms of the poetey that inſpired it.

Lycidas, though a weak and, in ſome reſpects, an incongruous poem, ſuch as probably cannot ſuſtain a trial by the ſevere laws of criticiſm, has nevertheleſs many beauties; but I would not have the world ſo deceived as to imagine that the blemiſhes of this poem are its imagery, for what would be its merit, being lyric, if it had not imagery? I will not allow any writer to criticiſe lyric poetry who has not as SHAKESPAR phraſes it, "muſic in his ſoul," and this obſervation cannot be conſidered as illiberal ſince I accompany it with a declaration that a man need not be indiſpenſibly a muſician to poſſeſs this divine quality.

Critics, verſed even to auſterity in all the nice and diſcriminating rules by which the nature of poetry are ſquared and meaſured, have my free conſent to examine an epic poem, a heroic poem, a didactic poem; but when good ſenſe, that forbids in one inſtance, permits in another, when fancy is unbound and the mind wearied with inſtruction ſeeks for pleaſure, it would be mortification inſtead of enjoyment not to encourage any latitude within the pale of conſiſtency.

We are told that in *Lycidas* "there are no ef-
"fuſions of real paſſion, for that paſſion runs not

" after remote alluſions and obſcure opinions;" to which is added, " that where there is leiſure for " fiction there is little for grief." What a blow is here aimed at the beauty of oriental poetry that has ſo long been the delight of the world.

Let us meet this critic half way; let us fairly admit that MILTON and his friend who was drowned were not ſhepherds; but does this prove that they did not admire the beauties of nature together? And if they did is it not very natural that the loſs of thoſe beauties ſhould be deplored.

But it ſo happens that this allegory is only ſubſervient to truth. Solitude is the abode of melancholy. In ſolitude, the ſhepherd or the poet if you will invokes his muſe, which according to theſe ſtrict injunctions ought to be forbidden too, for no muſe literally comes to a poet's aid, or even hears him. He invokes her with ſincerity, for he ſays

> So may ſome gentle muſe
> With lucky words favour my deſtined urn,
> And as he paſſes turn,
> And bid fair peace be to my ſable ſhroud:

Now this is not only ſincere but it is affecting, and has a great deal of the heart in it; but perhaps ſome cynic may inſiſt, to ſhew what criticiſm is, that it is

void of feeling and full of ſelf intereſt, for he only raiſes an urn to his friend that ſomebody may raiſe one to him.

If we permit this innovation, for if we did not we muſt cut up poetry, and particularly lyric poetry, by the roots, let us alſo give him leave, eſpecially as it is a ſweet and affecting ſentiment, to ſay

> For we were nurſed upon the ſelf ſame hill,
> Fed the ſame flock by fountain ſhade and rill,
> Together both, ere the high lawns appeared
> Under the opening eyelids of the morn,
> We drove a-field, and both together heard
> What time the grey-fly winds her ſultry horn,
> Battening our flocks with the freſh dews of night,
> Oft, till the ſtar, that roſe at evening bright,
> Towards heaven's deſcent had ſloped his weſtern wheel.

Here is a beautiful truth expreſſed by a figure, which figure adds innocence to friendſhip, and contemplation to ſentiment. We know MILTON and his friend, as our critic ſays, never drove a-field, by the way the critic has left out the hyphen, and that they had no flocks to batten, but if they obſerved theſe beautiful objects from a window, or even if they made them the theme of their admiration in a chimney corner, the implied truth remains invincible, and the heart irreſiſtably admits and partakes the real grief occaſioned by the ſeparation of two friends whoſe

minds were ſo well ſuited to receive and impart reciprocal delight and inſtruction.

So much for the critical defects of *Lycidas*. Its poetical errors are the errors of inexperience; but its beauties are in number and of magnitude enough infinitely to overcome both.

I have ſaid ſo much on the ſubject of *Lycidas*, becauſe one has naturally a greater pleaſure to juſtify than to blame. In the *Allegro* and the *Penſeroſo* as there is nothing to blame ſo there is nothing to juſtify. The diſtinctions are uniformly appropriate, and the ſentiments uniformly beautiful. The pleaſure is gay, chearful, and winning, but neither thoughtleſs, trifling, or licentious. The melancholy is neither ſour, ſarcaſtic, or moroſe, but complacent, ſoothing, and moral.

HANDEL, who is every where unequal, except in *Acis and Galatea*, has ſet ſome paſſages of theſe poems wonderfully, and others moſt unworthily indeed. Perhaps, which appears to have been his fault every where, he has attempted at the effect without feeling the ſentiment; but this will be placed in a better light hereafter. In the mean time, while ſome critics find melancholy in MILTON's mirth, and

others mirth in his melancholy, for that the *Allegro* begins with a deprecation of ſadneſs rather than an inovation to chearfulneſs, and *vice verſa*, let us reſt ſatisfied with taſting the beauties of two of the ſweeteſt and moſt winning poems that ever graced Engliſh literature.

Samſon Agoniſtes, which was altered into an oratorio by doctor MORELLE, into which HANDEL introduced ſome very good muſic, nay, the doubt is among his admirers, who knew beſt how to judge of its merits, whether this or *Judas Maccabeus* be his beſt oratorio, was not intended by MILTON for repreſentation, nor indeed is it capable of it.

It is however the beſt calculated ſubject for an oratorio of any that has ever been treated; for, without any violence or impropriety it naturally mixes the holy and the profane, and VOLTAIRE has ſo well taken this advantage of it that he has not only well adapted it to the ſtage, but has rendered it a good vehicle for muſic, which MILTON never dreamt of; for, as he knew from the ſubject it could not with propriety be repreſented, he has written the whole in blank verſe, making the ancients his model, and appearing fearful, leſt this claſſical ſpecies of tragedy ſhould be confounded with common interludes.

To ſay truth *Samſon* is not a tragedy but a morality, formed upon the principles of ÆSCHYLUS, SOPHOCLES, and EURIPIDES; to which ſpecies of tragedy MILTON is very ſolicitous that his readers ſhould give the preference, though in his chorus, becauſe he could not imitate them ſeparately, for they ſeparately diſagreed, he has literally taken, as nearly as the opportunity would permit, the manner of all.

Though ſomething primitive runs through every part of MILTON, yet it is wonderful that he, who knew the latitude and the liberality of the living as well as the dead languages, ſhould ſeriouſly prefer the ancient tragedy with "its incumbrance of a "chorus," as JOHNSON truly ſays, to the modern. The beſt authors find numberleſs difficulties in the way of making a tragedy natural; and, as every thing that appeals to the ſenſe muſt be more perfect as it approaches to nature, ſo tragedy being nature repreſented, every extraneous and auxilliary introduction that does not ſtrengthen the action, advance the intereſt, or facilitate the plot, is an impediment inſtead of an aſſiſtance, and therefore MILTON's poſition in this muſt be radically wrong; but his learning was auſtere, and his prejudices were bigotry, and thus his objects were rather grandeur than greatneſs, his language rather beauty than paſſion.

On the merits of *Paradiſe Loſt* I ſhall be very ſhort. It is out of my province; and, if it were not, all obſervation is now needleſs. No book ever found the level of its own intrinſic fame ſo correctly as this; and, though we have been taught to deplore that it ſold for a pityful ſum, and that in ſpight of the exertions of DRYDEN, whoſe conduct upon this occaſion muſt have been very amiable if MILTON thought him no poet, the arts of book-ſellers, and many other popular inducements, years elapſed before any impreſſion of conſequnce was vended; yet nothing tells its own ſtory ſo plain as the hiſtory of this work.

Paradiſe Loſt was written in a ſtyle above common comprehenſion, and the learned alone knew its value. Theſe are not always able, nor indeed willing to patronize literature; and therefore a book, which muſt be publicly taught before it can be publicly underſtood, muſt naturally make a very ſlow progreſs even towards notoriety; but, this attained, it requires ſtill more to give it celebrity, which it cannot arrive at till it be both univerſally read and felt; and, as it happens that *Paradiſe Loſt* cannot poſſibly be taſted by a twentieth part, perhaps a much larger proportion, of thoſe who have either willingly or compulſively gone through it, its tardy

approach to general encouragement is very eaſily accounted for; and thus will this great, this wonderful, this divine poem, though now in all libraries, and indeed in all pockets, except the application of a few quotations, remain alone for ever, a delicious feaſt for men of ſtrong genius and profound erudition.

Thoſe who have not dared to hint their doubts as to the merit of *Paradiſe Loſt,* for fear of betraying their ignorance, have, however, pretty well manifeſted it by their indiſcriminate reprobation of *Paradiſe Regained;* which would have no place in any library could it with decency be expunged from the works of MILTON. It is not ſo powerful a poem by a great difference as the other, it has, however, many beauties; but, as theſe were not ſo plainly within the comprehenſion of general readers as the faults, they have choſen to declare that it contains no beauties at all; and thus while they fancy they do juſtice on MILTON by decrying his work, they blindly do juſtice on themſelves by expoſing their own folly to the world's deriſion.

I have now only to ſpeak of *Comus;* a production which, as a drama, has been generally condemned, but highly commended as a piece of writing. I cannot ſee how a maſque may be cri-

ticiſed by critical dramatic rules, being a ſpecies of entertainment in which the author is permitted to reſort to ſupernatural agency and bring forward whatever may recreate and delight the fancy. A ſorcerer ever upon the watch to enſnare the innocent, a blameleſs woman betrayed into his power, and a protecting ſpirit who watches over her and averts her danger, are characters that ſerve to create an intereſt and ſecure it, and therefore nothing can be more perfectly dramatic taken in a general ſenſe.

It has been objected to the ſtory that it is not probable. "As far as the action is merely human," ſays doctor JOHNSON, "it ought to be reaſonable, "which can hardly be ſaid of the conduct of the "brothers; who, when their ſiſter ſinks with fatigue "in a pathleſs wilderneſs, wander both away to-"gether in ſearch of berries too far to find their "way back, and leave a helpleſs lady to all the ſad-"neſs and danger of ſolitude."

Now it ſo happens that, impoſſible as all this may appear, it is a fact; for it happened to lord BRACLY and Mr. EGERTON, ſons of the earl of BRIDGEWATER, and their ſiſter. They were paſſing through a place called Heywood Foreſt in HEREFORDSHIRE, and were benighted, and at length the lady was loſt. This being told to the earl

on their arrival, after many difficulties, at Ludlow Caſtle, which was their reſidence, MILTON was requeſted to form the ſtory into a maſque. LAWES was employed to compoſe the muſic, who performed himſelf the attendant ſpirit *.

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* What we ought exactly to credit upon this head it is difficult to ſay. LAWES is in general ſuppoſed to have compoſed the muſic of Comus. It is ſaid that in this taſk MILTON very materially aſſiſted him; which he certainly might have done as he learnt muſic of his father; but we are alſo told that IVES as well as LAWES was concerned in it, and that they had each a hundred pounds for their trouble; by the way if this was the truth they paid a better price for muſic at that time than they do now, but we are given further to underſtand that four gentlemen of the king's band were alſo invited to aſſiſt at the repreſentation; and, being ſet down previouſly to a collation where each had a covered plate lain for him, upon withdrawing the covers every man found forty pieces of gold "of their maſter's coin," ſays the hiſtorian, "for the firſt diſh!" All this, however, ſeems to wear an air more of plauſibility than truth; for there were but five ſongs originally in Comus, two of which, Sweet Echo, and Sabrina Fair, are undoubtedly the compoſition of LAWES. I think it more rational, either to put IVES out of the queſtion, or to ſuppoſe that he was one of the gentlemen of the chapel, and that he aſſiſted at the performance; for LAWES had certainly a great influence in the earl of BRIDGEWATER'S family. He taught lady ALICE EGERTON, and there is no doubt but that, having ſo fair an opportunity, he prevailed on MILTON to write the maſque to favour his intereſt, for he was permitted to dedicate it to the young lord in his own name, and in the dedication he intimates that the author ſtands aloof, for he ſays that it is a legitimate offſpring, although not openly acknowledged by its author. On this account I think it is very unlikely that he had any

Comus, as it was performed at Ludlow Caſtle, tells clearly and literally this hiſtory. Lord BRACLY, Mr. EGERTON and lady ALICE EGERTON, were actually the actors as well as the real perſons to whom the diſaſter happened; and, after Comus is diſcomfitted, which is the fabled part of the work, or taking it literally after their danger and diſtreſs are paſt, which might have been effected by a common guide, they are introduced firſt to the inhabitants of the town of LUDLOW, who were naturally alarmed at their abſence, and afterwards to their friends, ſo that, had the riot been that ill managed merriment, the lady originally ſuſpected,

> Such as the jocund flute or gameſome pipe
> Stirs up among the looſe unlettered hinds,

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aſſociate at all; for he was ſuffered, as moſt muſicians ridiculouſly are, to alter the author. Inſtead of the words

> So may'ſt thou be tranſlated to the ſkies,
> And give reſounding grace to all heav'n's harmonies.

He facetiouſly made it, fidler like,

> So may'ſt thou be tranſplanted to the ſkies,
> And hold a counterpoint to all heavens harmonies.

This may convince us that MILTON had not only a great deal of forbearance but was very accommodating; for it is not likely that he who made the pun could have written the dedication, and in this caſe LAWES ſeems to have been to MILTON what LULLY was to QUINAULT.

> When for their teeming flocks, and granges full,
> In wanton dance they praiſe the bounteous PAN,
> And thank the gods amiſs,

The ſituation would have been the ſame; for, ſays ſhe,

> I ſhould be loath
> To meet the rudeneſs, and ſwilled inſolence
> Of ſuch late waſſailers; yet Oh where elſe
> Shall I inform my unacquainted feet,
> In the blind mazes of this tangled wood.

In ſhort, conſider it as an entertainment written for a private family, than which nothing at that time could be more common, it is fully anſwerable to every purpoſe; for the ſtage, it would have been too tame and deſtitute of variety; but, at any rate, it contains the firſt principle of all that wonderful ſubtility of reaſon and reflection, ſo variouſly turned and tranſmuted in *Paradiſe Loſt*.

I ſhall, therefore, leave *Comus* till we come to it in the ſtate it was prepared by DALTON for the ſtage, principally out of MILTON, and embelliſhed with the delicious muſic of ARNE, and only ſay, by way of an humble tribute of eſteem to the memory of its author, that, while one celebrated writer ſays he cannot be brought to wiſh that "MILTON had been "a rhymer," which, heaven knows he was, and an

incomparable one, and another, " that he was great " rather than uſeful," in his particular career the world has ſeen nothing like his poetry that has ſo proudly emulated the ancients, that the longer language endures the more he will be admired, that his talents were ſo commanding he wrote for poſterity more than for the time he lived in, and that future ages, as they entwine the wreath of erudition, ſhall decorate it with the names of HOMER and MILTON.

COWLEY, a moſt ſingular and extraordinary writer, who produced a great deal to amuſe the fancy and but little to fix the mind, claims a place here on account of his having written a paſtoral called *Love's Riddle*, and a comedy under the title of The *Guardian*, and afterwards revived and called The *Cutter of Coleman Street.*

I ſhall not imitate an eminent biographer, who laments that he cannot aſcertain whether COWLEY's father was a ſectary or not, but adds very ſagaciouſly that whatever he was, as he died before his ſon was born that ſon was neceſſarily brought up by his mother; on the contrary I ſhall take a review, a ſhort one itmuſt be, of his works, and more particularly thoſe that fall regularly under my notice.

I look upon Cowley to have been the reverſe of Shakespear, for he deſtroyed a fervid and ſplendid genius by running it into every thing quaint and fantaſtic, inſtead of permitting it to indulge itſelf in ſimplicity and ſublimity. Thus his ideas are mature in childhood, and childiſh in old age, for forty nine might be called ſo in Cowley who exhauſted his mind as ſome do their conſtitutions.

His fancy was perpetually upon the ſtretch, and he for ever ſhunned what ſhould intereſt the heart for that which could only aſtoniſh the imagination; and yet, with tinſel, quaintneſs, and moſt tormenting expletives, we find him now and then a wonderful poet. He has been very properly ſtyled the greateſt of the metaphyſical writers, and the grand ſervice this has done mankind is, that, being the greateſt he was neceſſarily the laſt; for the riſk of ſoaring after him began to cool the fervour of his imitators, and they wondered to find that a purſuit after truth and nature, which was to be accompliſhed without any hazard, could captivate thoſe minds with delight which it had hitherto been their ſtudy to ſtrike with aſtoniſhment.

Strained hyperboles, and unnatural fictions, pervade the works of Cowley. They are full of

images, tinſel, conceits, and tropes. Whether he addreſs a miſtreſs, a god, or a paſſion, the object is likened to every thing in and out of nature. His muſe profeſſes all manner of trades and callings, and his mind is a complete muſeum of qualities, and yet when you do admire him he is greatly beautiful. See how he ſoars above PINDAR, and the next minute ſinks and grovels in the bathos.

Begin the ſong and ſtrike the living lyre:
Lo how the years to come, a numerous and well fitted quire,
All hand in hand do decently advance,
And to my ſong with ſmooth and equal meaſure dance
While the dance laſts, how long ſoe'er it be,
My muſick's voice ſhall bear it company,
Until all gentle notes be drowned
In the laſt trumpet's dreadful ſound.

But ſtop my muſe—
Hold thy pegaſus cloſely in
Which does to rage begin—
'Tis an unruly and a hard mouthed horſe—
'Twill no unſkilful touch endure,
But flings writer, and reader too, that ſits not ſure

Is not this a madman firſt in a lucid interval, and afterwards in a paroxyſm of frenzy. ADDISON, ſpeaking of his poem called the *Miſtreſs* ſays, "obſerving the cold regard of his miſtreſs's eyes, and "at the ſame time their power of producing love "in him, he conſiders them as burning glaſſes made

" made of ice. Finding himſelf able to live in the " greateſt extremities of love, he concludes the " torrid zone to the habitable.

See how COWLEY makes muſicians of the elements, and fairly qualifies them to ſing a glee in four parts. Speaking of order as it roſe out of Chaos he ſays,

The ungoverned parts no correſpondence knew;
An artleſs war from thwarting motions grew,
'Till they to number and fixed rules were brought;
Water, and air, he for the tenor choſe,
Earth made the baſs, the treble flame aroſe.

For hyberbole, MARTINUS SCRIBLERUS is a fool to COWLEY.

By every wind that comes this way,
Send me at leaſt a ſigh or two;
Such and ſo many I'll repay
As ſhall themſelves make winds to get to you.

But to have done with this ſenſible madman. Whatever excellence there may be found in the different parts of COWLEY, to whatever heights he may have arrived in his flights of fancy, whatever real gems may be hid among his foil ſtones and his tinſel, all our reſearches are curioſity without gratification, and toil without profit. His works are like a meteor burnt out, that aſtoniſhed beholders with its glare while it laſted; but, its influence once over, it

has ever ſince remained the ruin of what it was, a dull opaque body, incapable of emitting fire, or reflecting light.

Love's Riddle, written when COWLEY was but fifteen, is a paſtoral and has had the advantage, if it may be called ſo, of much indiſcriminate praiſe, throughall which we ſee, however, that it was a very puerile performance. Doctor JOHNSON ſays it is of the paſtoral kind "which," ſays he, "requires no ac-"quaintance with the living world, and therefore, "being compoſed while the author was yet at ſchool, "it adds little to the wonders of his minority." It muſt be noticed that COWLEY, like POPE, liſped in numbers.

The *Guardian*, which COWLEY ſays was neither written nor acted but rough drawn by him and repeated by the ſcholars, was fitted to the ſtage after a time under the name of The *Cutter of Coleman Street;* but it is ſurely a very poor play, and, if by this time its author had acquired an acquaintace with the living world, he has treated men and manners ſo clumſily that he might as well have kept to his fawns and his ſatyrs. It was very ill received, but his friends had adroitneſs enough to palliate his diſgrace by aſſerting that the fall of the piece was owing to a miſtaken notion that it was a party buſineſs.

So much for Cowley, one of the moſt extraordinary genuiſes, as they are called, this kingdom has produced; but it ſhould ſeem that his talent was fire and not genius; and the greateſt admirers of Cowley muſt allow that whatever fervour, thought, conception, or other ſtriking quality there may be in his works there cannot be found the fainteſt ray of ſolid immutable judgement.

CHAP V.

WALLER, THE THREE KILLIGREWS, AND OTWAY.

WALLER, who was the reverſe of COWLEY, who ſo far from ſoaring ſcarcely crept, and whoſe muſe, inſtead of imbibing the *aqua vitæ* of poetry was as inſipid as that water which was his conſtant beverage, has a claim to be mentioned here on account of having brought on the ſtage, with alterations, BEAUMONT and FLETCHER's play called The *Maid's Tragedy*.

I have no room here to ſhew in what manner WALLER contrived all his life to gain the favour of oppoſite intereſts; by what means he eſcaped puniſhment for having been concerned in a plot in favour of the king; how he managed always to be in parliament; how he made the pliable materials that had been acceptable to CHARLES the firſt, acceptable to CROMWELL, and afterwards to CHARLES the ſecond; how he found means daſtardly to deſert his friends and patrons in diſtreſs, and to

poſſeſs their favour in proſperity; theſe are above the arts of an ordinary man, but they are beneath the dignity of an honeſt one.

WALLER's famous anſwer to CHARLES the ſecond, when he pointed out the diſparity between the panegyric on CROMWELL and the congratulation on his reſtoration, that "Poets ſucceed better in "fiction than in truth," was as unworthy the poet as the man, and ſhews there was leſs art in the crime than in its juſtification. Poetry has nothing to do with literal fiction, it only employs figurative fiction to embelliſh literal truth.

Was this the part WALLER took upon this occaſion? No; his conduct was baſe and venal. After ſpeaking, writing, and acting, in defence of his injured king, while there was a chance of redreſs for him, in which caſe the poet would have reaped the reward of proſtituted praiſe, for ſurely praiſe ſo attained is proſtituted, the moment the royal influence began to droop, by means of colonel SCROOP, who had married his ſiſter, and his own mother, who was related both to CROMWELL and to HAMPDEN, he attempted at conciliating the uſurper's favour and ſucceeded. His favourable and dutiful ſentiments towards his king were inſtantly loſt and forgotten. He not only framed the panegyric in which he

tacitly juſtifies the deſtruction of the church, the murder of the king, and the tumult and oppreſſion in which the nation were involved, but he followed up, not the effuſion of a poet, but the dark, concerted, meditated deſign of a rebel to his country, by his poem on the war with SPAIN, in which he both attempts to induce the nation to offer the uſurper the crown, and uſes every poſſible inſinuating argument to procure his acceptance of it *.

He takes the moment when the nation is warm after the Spaniſh defeat and ſays,

> Let the brave generals divide that bough,
> Our great Protector has ſuch wreaths enough:
> His conquering head has no more room for bays:
> Then let it be as the glad nation prays;
> Let the rich ore forewith be melted down,
> And the ſtate fixed by making him a crown:
> With ermine clad, and purple, let him hold
> A royal ſceptre, made of Spaniſh gold.

The poetry of WALLER was greatly admired in its time, for it was inovation, introdnced with ſo

* This CROMWELL, from motives of policy, refuſed; but, to prove that his intention was to rule as a deſpotic monarch, he projected at this time his curious expedition againſt SPAIN in hopes to be enabled by foreign ſpoil, to eſtabliſh his government in what form and upon what principle he might think proper, without having recourſe to counſels or parliaments; and for this projected ſcheme he is ſaid, abſurdly enough without doubt, to have taken a hint from one of DAVENANT's plays.

much the more cunning as that it ſeemed to ſet up nature againſt art. The metaphyſical poetry had wound up aſtoniſhment till the ſtring cracked; and WALLER, to aſſume to himſelf an air of originality, hoped to get immortal fame by reconciling poetry to truth and nature; but, unfortunately, not having ſoul enough for the undertaking, he became very ſoon what the painters call a manneriſt, and ſat himſelf down contentedly under an idea that he had arrived to the utmoſt perfection in the imitation of nature, whereas he ought to have conſidered that nature is inimitable. In ſhort, as COWLEY harmonized his numbers out of their melody, WALLER melodized his out of their harmony; and thus, by neglecting every thing nervous and ſpirited, his venal productions excepted, which are deſpiſed another way, he has left nothing behind him but an ingenious and elegant collection of lullabies.

The *Maid's Tragedy* was altered by WALLER from BEAUMONT and FLETCHER, but had little ſucceſs. He points out in the prologue how the audience may diſtinguiſh between his writing and that of the original authors.

> In this old play, what's new we have expreſſed
> In rhiming verſe, diſtinguiſhed from the reſt
> That as the Rhone its haſty way does make
> (Not mingling waters) through Geneva's lake
> So, having here the different ſtyles in view,
> You may compare the former with the new.

This is enough to ſhew that it is a ſtrange patch-work buſineſs, which it turned out, for it was ſoon withdrawn and has never been reſumed.

WALLER alſo made ſome alterations, with the aſſiſtance of the earl of DORSET, in Mrs. PHILIPS's tragedy of *Pompey;* which, at the inſtance of lord ORRERY ſhe had tranſlated from CORNEILLE. The lady took offence at this and in revenge ridiculed WALLER's double rhimes, and it muſt be confeſſed ſucceſsfully enough. Indeed theſe and others were points in which this poet might eaſily have been aſſailed. His numbers are ſmooth in general, though ſeldom muſical, but his rhimes are weak, the expletive do frequently occurs, and there are many other radical objections to his poetry. Hyperbole may be vaped as well as poignant; labouring at triflles to make them important turns to dullneſs; in ſhort, if COWLEY's muſe was a coquette and a romp, WALLER's was a prude and full of mock modeſty; and thus in different ways they equally diſguſt; one is bold, the other preciſe; one careleſs, volatile, and forward, attracts only a tranſient regard; the other conceited, ſelf-ſufficient, vain and hypocritical, ſoon experiences, in ſpight of the little regard ſhe had attracted, cold neglect, and palling indifference.

During the reigns of CHARLES the firſt and CHARLES the ſecond, flouriſhed three KILLIGREWS, ſons of ſir ROBERT KILLIGREW, or KILLEGREW, all of them play-wrights, and in other reſpects men of ſome celebrity. Sir WILLIAM KILLIGREW, the elder brother, was a very conſpicuous adherent of CHARLES the firſt. He was very early made governor of Pendennis Caſtle in Falmouth Haven, and put in command of the whole Weſtern militia.

After this he was brought to court and placed immediately about the king's perſon, and he had the command of two troops of guards for the ſafety of his royal maſter during the war with the parliament. He became, however, an obſcure character in the general troubles, and we know but little of him till CHARLES the ſecond, anxious to ſhew attention to an old ſervant of his father, or as ſome ſay out of regard to his brother THOMAS, for CHARLES was not remarkable for gratitude, reſtored him to the poſt of gentleman uſher of the privy chamber, which he had held under the late king, and afterwards created him the queen's vice chamberlain, which honourable ſituation he enjoyed twenty-two years, during which time the world are indebted to him, beſides other literary productions, for fiive dramatic pieces.

Of theſe plays we do not find any very favourable mention, and indeed they ſeem to have been written more to employ leiſure time than as claims to public favour; nay ſo humble was his opinion as to his merit that it was with difficulty he could be prevailed upon to publiſh one of his plays, called The *Imperial Tragedy*, and at laſt would not ſuffer his name to be affixed to it. As for the reſt of his pieces which are *Pandora*, *Ormaſdes*, *Selindra*, and The *Siege of Urbin;* Theſe were all ſpoken well of by WALLER, STAPLETON, and CARLELS, and printed in 1666.

THOMAS KILLIGREW, commonly known by the name of king CHARLES's jeſter, produced ten plays. They were principally written for his amuſement when he was abroad; and not, as it was generally imagined, in quality of manager of his own theatre, for it is pretty clear, as we have ſeen, that he never had one *.

* Sir JOHN DENHAM's facetious copy of verſes, on KILLIGREW's return from his embaſſy at VENICE, comes up to pretty nearly a proof of this; for had his plays been written for the theatre the opportunity of being witty on it is ſo palpable that he could not have miſtaken it. The lines are well known, but will nevertheleſs bear inſertion,

Our reſident TOM
From VENICE is come,
And has left all the ſtateſmen behind him;

The hiſtory of KILLIGREW, and that he followed CHARLES the ſecond in exile, and returned with him, that he was groom of the bed chamber, and continued in high favour with the king, and had acceſs to him when he denied himſelf to the firſt characters in the kingdom, is perfectly well drawn. He had ſuch lively parts, and was a man of ſuch excentricity and peculiar humour that he was a perfect counterpart to CHARLES; and, having been admitted to habits of freedom and familiarity during their reſidence abroad, he was ſuffered to go ſometimes moſt unwarrantable lengths in the liberties he took, There is a ſtory told that he came to the king dreſſed like a pilgrim; and, being aſked where he was going, he anſwered to fetch OLIVER CROMWELL from hell to take care of the affairs of the nation, for that his ſucceſſor took no care at all of them.

Talks at the ſame pitch
Is as wiſe, and as rich,
And juſt where you left him you'll find him.

But who ſays he's not
A man of much plot,
May repent of this falſe accuſation;
Having plotted and penned
Six plays, to attend
On the farce of his negociation.

This is not correct, for he wrote nine plays while he was abroad.

His plays ſeems not at all to have been performed, and ſome of them appear to have been brought out at ſir WILLIAM DAVENANT's theatre, which completely diſcredits his having been manager of the king's company. The *Priſoners*, 1663, was a tragedy, but we know nothing of its ſucceſs. On this play and *Claracilla*, a tragi-comedy, ſome recommendatory verſes are ſaid to have been written by CARTWRIGHT, and others.

The *Princeſs*, tragi-comedy, which was written at NAPLES, is a romantic thing and was taken from a traditional Neapolitan ſtory. The *Pilgrim* was written at PARIS, but is very little calculated for repreſentation. The *Parſon's Wedding*. This comedy was certainly performed firſt in 1664, but whether by DAVENANT's company or KILLIGREW's we have no account; and now, to make amends for the want of women on the ſtage previous to the eſtabliſhment of theſe companies, it was revived at the the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Field's, and performed entirely by women, with a new prologue and epilogue, ſpoken by Mrs. MARSHALL in men's cloaths.

By this play we pretty well get at KILLIGLEW's real merit, which ſeems to have been no more than a general predilection for literature, and perhaps

dramatic literature in particular. The *Parſon's Wedding*, with the help of the ſciſſars and the paſte pot, is little more than a mixture of The *Antiquary*, *Ram Alley*, The *Engliſh Rogue*, and other things which furniſhed the materials afterwards for *Woman's a Riddle*, a play which, as we ſhall ſee hereafter, BULLOCK and SAVAGE held a diſputed right in; but which came, and indeed ſo did all the reſt, from a Spaniſh play called *La Dama Duende*, which was tranſlated by Mrs. PRICE, wife to one of the Barons of the Exchequer. It is a ſprightly comedy, and when you have ſaid that you have ſaid all.

Cecilia and Clorinda, of which there is a firſt and ſecond part, making two plays. Theſe were written abroad, and one of them appears to have been performed at DAVENANT's theatre in 1664. *Thomaſo, or the Wanderer*, is a comedy alſo in two parts, or rather two comedies on the ſame ſubject, one of theſe was performed, ſome ſay they were both. The plot is ſtolen from various things, one part of it in particular from JONSON's *Volpone*, and another from a poem of CAREW, which theft KILLIGREW acknowledges. Theſe plays, together with two others on one ſubject called *Bellamira her Dream*, were all publiſhed in 1664.

Dr. HENRY KILLIGREW was a year younger

than his brother THOMAS. He got early into high preferment in the church, for at the age of thirty he had taken the degree of Doctor of Divinity, and was immediately appointed chaplain to the duke of YORK, and given a ſtall in Weſtminſter Abbey. He was like his brothers, faithful to the Royal Family, and ſuffered with them; but, on the reſtoration he was made almoner to the duke of YORK, ſuperintendant of his chapel, rector of Wheathamſted in HERTFORDSHIRE, and maſter of the Savoy, which place he retained fifty years.

As this is the only HENRY KILLIGREW of eminence that we know of at that time, it has been naturally conjectured that he was the patentee, but there is certainly no credible reaſon to be given for this ſurmiſe. It is true that he was a long time ſtationary and might have attended to any purſuit of that kind; but he would in ſuch caſe probably have embelliſhed his theatre with his writing, having given one very good ſpecimen of his dramatic abilities, and again ſuch an undertaking might have been conſidered as incompatible with the ſanctity of his character.

The only play he produced was written at the age of ſeventeen, and it was conſidered as a very extraordinary effort. It was written for the enter-

tainment of the king and queen at York Houſe, on the nuptials of lady MARY VILLIERS and lord CHARLES HERBERT, and was afterwards performed at Blackfriers, when it was highly extolled by all the wits, but particularly, ſays my author, by JONSON, but this happens to be impoſſible for JONSON died the year before.

Cleander, the principal character in the play is repreſented as ſeventeen years of age, and when a critic obſerved that it was a moſt ridiculous piece of abſurdity for ſuch a youth to expreſs himſelf in language that became a man of thirty, adding that it was monſtrous and impoſſible, Lord FALKLAND replied that nothing could be ſo abſurd and ridiculous as the remark, for that, ſo far from being monſtrous and impoſſible for one of ſeventeen to utter ſuch ſentiments, it was perfectly in nature, ſince the author wrote the whole play when he was no older. This play was afterwards publiſhed with many improvements, under the title of *Pallantus and Eudora.* I have already mentioned that this gentleman was father to the celebrated Miſs ANNE KILLIGREW, who was eſteemed as well for her virtues as for her poetry and painting.

We are now come to OTWAY, a weak and unfortunate man, and a great and extraordinary writer.

Otway, though liberally educated, ſeems to have been poor from his infancy. He early in life commenced actor and completely failed. It has been generally agreed that writing and acting depend upon different faculties. That perſon, demeanour, face, and voice, ought to be always at the command of an actor is beyond contradiction; and, when it ſo happens that an actor fails in theſe requiſites it is clearly impoſſible that he can acquire reputation on the ſtage; but there is ſomething alſo in mind, conception, and knowledge of nature and the heart; which, if an author manifeſts in his writings an actor is compelled to expreſs.

It has been remarked, by way of ſetting the matter right, that the author has watched the heart, and the actor contemplated the face; but I cannot narrow the queſtion to ſo thin a concluſion. Is it unneceſſary then that an actor ſhould feel and think? Is action and geſticulation all the requiſites he has occaſion for? Will any body venture to declare this who has ſeen Garrick in Lear, or Hamlet, Barry in Othello, Shuter in the Miſer, Macklin in Shylock, King in Lord Ogleby, Mrs. Clive in the Widow Blackacre, or Mrs. Siddons in Mrs. Beverley, or the Grecian Daughter? For I don't

care whence the inſtances come ſo they are but ſtrong and in nature.

Upon occaſions like theſe, actors will ſometimes give a force and a truth to a character beyond what the author himſelf had conceived, and I could name literal inſtances of it. Let it not then be credited that an actor is but a mere vehicle, a conveyance. Many that paſs for actors indeed are but little more but the eminent requiſites are ſtrongly mental, and require a great deal that good authors have, and a great deal that they want; and it is upon this account that, while the ſtage has been inundated by authors for two hundred years, many of them men of great talents, the world has ſeen but one BETTERTON, and one GARRICK.

OTWAY was perpetually in all manner of diſtreſs and diſquiet. His eaſineſs of temper made him too kind, and his poverty too accommodating; and thus he was always waſting his wit for the amuſement of wealthy fools, and accepting his reckoning by way of recompence. His companions were profligate men, ſuch as would bring him into ſcrapes and there leave him. One of theſe my lord PLYMOUTH, an illegitimate ſon of CHARLES the ſecond, procured him a cornet's commiſſion and ſent him into

FLANDERS; but he ſoon left the army and returned moſt miſerably poor, and conſequently deſerted, till he brought out a play which afforded him a temporary ſupply.

It was at this time he was illiberally handled by ROCHESTER in his *Seſſion of the Poets;* but he went on diſſipating what he had, and ſtriving to earn more, to follow the ſame game, in which he played a deep ſtake indeed; for he loſt his health, his independancy, and his conſequence; till, at length, before he had attained his thirty-fifth year, ſunk into the moſt abject poverty, hunted by inexorable creditors, deſerted by all the world, and loathſome to himſelf, he died, as we are told, by ſwallowing part of a roll which he was enabled to purchaſe by the caſual charity of a perſon who met him and had known him in better days *.

* Dr. JOHNSON with great propriety has taken ſome pains to aſcertain the probability of this fact. He ſays he hopes it is not true, and that "there is ground of better hope from POPE, who "lived near enough to be informed, and who relates in SPENCER's "Memorials that OTWAY died of a fever he caught by a violent "purſuit of a thief that had robbed one of his friends." For the ſake of humanity let us admit this account rather than the other. It will not, however, wipe off the ſtain of his being deſerted by thoſe he had delighted in company, or thoſe whoſe cauſe he had nobly defended from innate principles of zealous loyalty. But this is not to be wondered at for, at that time, the reward of loyalty was poverty and neglect.

If this be true what ſhall we ſay of the times in which he lived? He has been called the Engliſh RACINE*, the poet of the heart, and the tender OTWAY; yet was WALLER for flattering a uſurper and afterwards belying his principles, loaded with penſions and preferments; while OTWAY, who melted the heart, and refined into nature what the mathematical poets had ſquared by rules of art, was as poor as a beggar, and ſuffocated by an effuſion of gratitude in return for an act of charity.

The dramatic pieces of OTWAY were produced in the following ſucceſſion. *Alcibiades* 1675. This tragedy is ſaid by ſome to have been taken from

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* VOLTAIRE is extremely hurt that OTWAY ſhould be compared to RACINE. He criticiſes the *Orphan*, holding up *Hamlet* as a parallel to it in the ſame way that PLUTARCH compares his heroes. But he is ſure to attack a poet only where he may be hit. He ſays, "The Orphan is indecent, that the waggiſh part of the audience "have reaſon to expect that the marriage is to be conſummated on "the ſtage, and that if the reader find any impropriety in this, it is "more than the author did, for with the ſame ſimplicity with which "he wrote the play, he dedicated it to the Ducheſs of CLEVELAND, "and congratulated her on having two illegitimate children by "CHARLES the ſecond." But this, ſevere as it is in the eye of a a ſuperficial reader, is mere cavil. He dared not, as a genius and a ſcholar, to examine the beauties of OTWAY's language, for had he done ſo, he would have evidently ſhewn that they at leaſt equal thoſe of RACINE, and excel his own. But VOLTAIRE would at any time ſooner give up his veracity than his jeſt.

Cornelius Nepos, Plutarch, and others, and doctor Johnson regrets that Langbaine, whom he calls the great detector of plagiarism, has not discovered whether or not it is taken from the *Alcibiade* of Palapran *. There is no French tragedy called *Alcibiade*, except one written by Campistron, which came out ten years after Otway's play, and has evidently a smack of it; but it has also passages from *Themistocle* by De Ryer, to which Otway, perhaps, first resorted. At any rate it was the first of his tragedies, and therefore the weakest.

Don Carlos, 1676, was Otway's second play. It was written in heroic verse, and the story is from a novel by St. Real, which after all is taken from the *Spanish Chronicles*. It had very extraordinary success, and therefore provoked the illiberal lampoon from lord Rochester, who, perhaps, while he abused Otway would have been content to have borrowed some of his money, which at any rate,

* What Palapran?—We have gone over Palaprat, the associate of Brueys; but, neither alone nor in conjunction with his friend, did he produce an *Alcibiade*; besides, if there is an *Alcibiade* of Palapran, why could not the Doctor have the means of enquiring into the similitude as easily as Langbaine, who says after all that this play is certainly taken from Plutarch.

poor unfortunate man, he laviſhed away almoſt to as bad a purpoſe *.

Titus and Berenice, 1677. This tragedy is ſaid to have been a tranſlation of RACINE's *Berenice*, which piece, as we have ſeen, was written by the command of LOUIS the fourteenth to compliment his ſiſter, and which being ſeverely handled by the critics was a conſiderable deduction from the poet's reputation; but it ſo happens that whenever RACINE is mentioned in this country CORNEILLE fades away before him, ſo much longer does ſtyle hold place in literature than genius. It ſhould be remembered that CORNEILLE wrote a tragedy upon this ſubject as well as RACINE, and upon the ſame occaſion; but, introducing truth where he was commanded to uſe flattery, his polite and politic rival triumped over him †. Plays written upon particular

* BOOTH wrote a letter to AARON HILL wherein he ſays "Mr. "BETTERTON obſerved to me many years ago, that Don Carlos "ſucceeded much better than either *Venice Preſerved*, or the "*Orphan*, and was infinitely more applauded and better followed "for many years."

† If the reader will turn back to CORNEILLE, it will be found that all the world were at this time crying him down being old and holding up RACINE who was in the vigour of life. The Duke of MONTAUSIER, who, though a miſanthrope, was tainted with this

occaſions ſeldom ſucceed beyond the moment. OTWAY, therefore, was unfortunate in his choice; and, though he wiſely turned to CORNEILLE's play more than to RACINE's, his ſucceſs did not warrant the pains he took to obtain it. This play is in three acts aud written in rhime.

The *Cheats of Scapin*, which was brought out alſo in 1677, was perhaps intended as an after piece to be performed with *Titus and Berenice*. It is nothing more than a tranſlation of MOLIERE's *Fourberies de Scapin*, of which the reader has ſeen a particular account. It was, however, a very pleaſant farce and has been very often repeated highly to the ſatisfaction of the public.

Friendſhip in Faſhion. Of the ſucceſs of this comedy, which was produced in 1678, we know no more than through the report of two authors, one of whom ſays it was performed originally with the greateſt applauſe, and the other that it was revived in 1749 and hiſſed off the ſtage for obſcenity and immorality. It might have merit neverthelefs, for theſe

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new taſte, ſaid to CORNEILLE, "Monſieur CORNEILLE, when I was "young I wrote pretty verſes. I am now old and my genius is ex- "tinguiſhed. Believe me we had better leave the flaſhes of poetry "to the fire of youth."

reports only prove, what every body knows, that the manners in the reign of CHARLES the ſecond were profligate and of GEORGE the ſecond rational.

Caius Marius, 1680, is the moſt inſignificant of all OTWAY's plays, and diſcovers, whatever may be his writing ſingly, that it ſhews to great diſadvantage when placed by the writing of SHAKESPEAR. It had very little ſucceſs.

We come now to conſider the *Orphan*, a play which in ſpight of the many objections that lie againſt it, has always by its facinating power kept conſtant hold on the ſtage and the public. It was produced in 1680. The ſtory is taken from the Hiſtory of BRANDON, in a novel called *Engliſh Adventures*. Many of the circumſtances are ſtrangely revolting, and the bully CHAMONT is a troubleſome gentleman; and, as far as it relates to him, VOLTAIRE is right; but it ſhould be remembered he never ſpeaks of an author but where he is vulnerable*. The diſtreſſes and calamities, being domeſtic, being

* "Among the reſt," ſays VOLTAIRE, "there is a brother of "this MONIMIA, a ſoldier of fortune, who becauſe he and his ſiſter "are cheriſhed and maintained by this worthy family, abuſes them "all round. Do me juſtice you old Put," ſays he to the father, "or damme I'll ſet your houſe on fire." "My dear boy," ſays the accommodating old gentleman, "you ſhall have juſtice."

ſweetly and tenderly written, and appealing directly to the heart and the ſenſes, while it can be well acted the *Orphan* muſt infallibly grace the theatre, and intereſt the public.

The circumſtance of its being facetiouſly ſaid that a farthing ruſh-light might have ſaved a great deal of miſchief, is nonſenſe; for the ſame objection will lie againſt every plot. It has been ſaid in the ſame manner, Why did not the Friar ſend ROMEO's letter to MANTUA by the poſt? And the anſwer to all this is that the plot ought not to be ſpoiled, nor the end of tragedy perverted.

The *Soldier's Fortune*, a comedy, was produced in 1681. It has a great deal of wit and pleaſantry, and might be made into a good play, but for one inſuperable objection, which is the looſeneſs and licentiouſneſs of its writing. This probably is the ſole reaſon of its having been excluded from the ſtage ſince the profligate reign in which it firſt appeared.

It is taken from many things, and is a jumble of Engliſh, French and Italian materials, that have been ſeparately borrowed and exchanged over and over

again. It was ſucceeded by a ſecond part, or ſequel, called The *Atheiſt*, part of which is taken from SCARRON's novel called The *Inviſible Miſtreſs*. The ſame objection lies againſt both theſe plays. They are immoral and indecent, conſequently when public manners began to refine, they were expelled the theatre.

With *Venice Preſerved* I ſhall cloſe OTWAY. This tragedy was produced in 1682, and has been always deſervedly a favourite of the public. The writing is ſtronger and more ſound than that of the *Orphan*, and it has the peculiar excellence of appealing ſo forcibly to the heart and the underſtanding that every body recollects it with pleaſure. The character of PIERRE, notwithſtanding it has been often urged that BELVIDERA is the only valuable perſonage in the play, is greatly and nobly drawn; and, however we may deteſt treaſon, or delight in its detection and puniſhment, his conduct is a ſolemn and ſacred leſſon held up to teach ſovereigns to beware of returning public ſervices with ingratitude. PIERRE was a greatly injured character, but he guiltily erred by his mode of redreſs, and was deſervedly puniſhed for his temerity.

The Abbe St. REAL, who by VOLTAIRE and

others has been conſidered as another SALLUST, from his *Hiſtoire de la conjuration de Marquis de Bedemar*, furniſhed OTWAY with the ſubject for this play. The ſpeech of RENAULT to the conſpirators is tranſlated word for word from this author; but he has ſo honoured St. REAL that the hiſtory is better known by the play than the play by the hiſtory *. *Venice Preſerved* was originally a very licentious play, but a great deal of the objectional matter has long been expunged; and, though it is not now properly cleared away, the play poſſeſſes very great merit, and plainly ſhews that, had not its

* VOLTAIRE here has indulged again his old ſpleen againſt OTWAY, by ſaying that he ought to have ſtuck more cloſely to his original, not chuſing to remember, probably, that a play and a hiſtory are very different things, and that "after all *Manlius*, written "by de FOSSE, is a better play than *Venice Preſerved*." *Manlius* is certainly written upon the ſame ſubject but ſo far from its being a better play though it was ſaid, as we have ſeen, that CORNEILLE might have been proud of it, the greateſt merit of it conſiſts of thoſe ſcenes de FOSSE has borrowed from OTWAY, who had been dead thirteen years before *Manlius* appeared. If VOLTAIRE had been juſt enough to have noticed that la PLACE, in 1746, produced a tragedy called *Venice Sauvee*, confeſſedly a tranſlation from *Venice Preſerved*, which had great ſucceſs, and gave the French nation a very high opinion of OTWAY, it would have been more to his credit than perpetually blazoning the faults of a man and concealing his beauties, when he himſelf knew more eaſily how to imitate the firſt than the laſt.

unfortunate author been prematurely cut off, had he not been abridged of the advantages of moral example, both in the times in which he lived and the manners of thoſe he converſed with, he would have been handed down to poſterity as one of the moſt ſhining ornaments of Engliſh literature.

CHAP VI.

DENHAM, FLECKNOE, COCKAYNE, THE HOWARDS, LORD FALKLAND, SIR GEORGE ETHERIDGE, Mrs. PHILIPS, BUCKINGHAM, DUFFET, RYMER, AND SUCKLING.

As I now count one hundred and thirty eight dramatic writers not yet mentioned, whoſe works were written before the revolution, it will be very proper in ſome way to clear them off, that the ſtage may be at leiſure for DRYDEN and other authors of more eminence.

I ſhall begin with a few which I can dwell on with propriety as their names are deſervedly held in eſteem. Sir JOHN DENHAM, one of thoſe who began to refine Engliſh poetry from the flights and hyperboles of COWLEY and his metaphyſical adherents, merits a place any where to his celebration, but his title to notice in this work ariſes from his having written a tragedy called The *Sophy*. I ſhall

not, however, loſe the pleaſure this opportunity gives me of ſpeaking further of him.

DENHAM, who as an author very gravely tells us, an Iriſhman probably, that being ſon to the lord chief baron of the exchequer in IRELAND, he was of courſe born in DUBLIN, maintained a conſpicuous character in ſociety. Being violently addicted to gaming his friends had very little hopes of his ever making any conſiderable figure notwithſtanding every pains was taken with his education, and every advantage given him as to polite and elegant accompliſhments; nor did they dream that ſuch a a ſpark lay under ſuch a heap of rubbiſh, till all of a ſudden he brought forward his tragedy of the *Sophy* at the age of twenty-ſeven.

WALLER upon this occaſion ſaid that DENHAM "broke out like the Iriſh rebellion, three "ſcore thouſand ſtrong when nobody was aware or "at leaſt ſuſpected it." Soon after this he publiſhed *Cooper's Hill*, a poem that had ſo much merit as to "excite," ſays doctor JOHNSON, "the common "artifice by which envy degrades excellence. A re-"port was ſpread that the poem was not his own "but that he had bought it of a vicar for forty "pounds." The ſame attempt was made to rob

" ADDISON of his *Cato*, and POPE of his *Eſſay on* " *Criticiſm.*"

The fineſt traits in the character of DENHAM are thoſe which deſcribe him as a ſtaunch, warm, and dutiful loyaliſt. The ſervices he engaged in were full of difficulty and perſonal danger, yet he braved them to ſerve the injured king and his unfortunate family. He undertook to deliver a meſſage from the queen to the king when he was in cuſtody of the army, he raiſed ten thouſand pounds for him among his Scottiſh ſubjects in POLAND, and he conveyed away JAMES, duke of YORK, from LONDON into FRANCE, and delivered him there to his mother and brother.

At the Reſtoration he was rewarded for his former ſervices and grew into opulence, and he now indulged himſelf in his own proper ſphere; to how good a purpoſe let his various productions ſhew which GARTH and POPE have imitated, and which gave a poliſh to DRYDEN.

The *Sophy* is built upon a ſtory in HERBERT'S *Travels*, treated alſo by BARON, but as he and DENHAM purſued the ſubject differently each author has been aſſigned his ſeparate merit, DENHAM, how-

ever, claims the right of originality, having written his play five years before BARON's piece was produced. They were both ſucceſsful.

FLECKNOE is a name which would now perhaps have been forgotton had not DRYDEN handed it down to poſterity in a different way than the gentleman's own vanity perhaps induced him to think it intitled to. LANGBAINE whimſically ſays that his acquaintance with the nobility was more than with the Muſes, and that he had a greater propenſity to rhiming than a genius to poetry. He printed ſeveral plays but never could get but one performed, for which he himſelf gives different reaſons. "Thoſe," ſays he, "who have the go-
"verning of the ſtage, have their humours and
"muſt be entreated, and I have mine and won't
"entreat them, and were all dramatic writers of
"my mind they ſhould wear their old plays thread
"bare before they ſhould get any new ones till they
"better underſtood their own intereſt and how to
"diſtinguiſh between good and bad."

The only play of this author that was acted is a paſtoral tragi-comedy. It was inſtantly damned, and FLECKNOE, a Jeſuit himſelf, and following the jeſuitical conduct of JONSON upon a like occaſion,

fall upon the actors and the public for not doing him juſtice. His plays, *Loves Dominion*, "written "as a pattern for the reformed ſtage," *Erminia*, *Deſmoiſelles ala Mode*, and The *Marriage of Oceanus and Britannia*, were never performed. He was determined, however, to be even with the actors, for he publiſhed the plays with their names placed oppoſite the characters, that ſo his readers might have the pleaſure of fancying they ſaw them performed; which, to a lively imagination, he ſays, muſt convey as much pleaſure as being preſent at the theatre.

Sir ASTON COCKAYNE, who knew polite literature, and encouraged it, who in common with many other gentlemen of liberal principles and abilities, ſuffered in the political ſtorm that ſhipwrecked the fortunes of CHARLES the firſt, and returned to paſs the latter part of his life in peace and ſerenity after the reſtoration, wrote four plays.

The *Obſtinate Lady*, a tragedy, date 1657, is an imitation of MASSINGER's *Very Woman*, but it had no material ſucceſs. *Trapoline ſuppoſed a Prince*, which the author had ſeen at VENICE, and therefore was induced to try his hand at it, is one of

thoſe incongruous Italian pieces which we have already examined the ſtyle of. It is, however, very well calculated to excite laughter when the mind has been accommodating enough to admit its abſurdities; and, as a proof of this, let me bring to the recollection of many viſiters of the theatre how much they have laughed at the ſame piece, cut to a farce under the title of *Duke and no Duke.*

A Maſque for Twelfth Night, was an occaſional thing performed before PHILIP earl of CHESTERFIELD and his lady, in which their two ſons repreſented the principal characters; which may ſhew that the CHESTERFIELDS had always an eye to the Graces, though the eldeſt of them, who afterwards ſo loudly inveighed againſt a nobleman's making himſelf a fidler, probably took the hint from his being forced ſo early in life, for no doubt it was againſt his will, to turn actor.

Ovid's Tragedy is another inſtance that COCKAYNE was infected with a love of the Italian theatre, a taſte than which nothing can be more falſe, though there is always ſomething that intereſts and amuſes. Some of the circumſtances are taken from a piece which BEAUMONT and FLETHCHER have imitated in *King and no King*, and which ſeems to have

formed the ground work for the *Revenge*. HANNIBAL's inviting the dead carcaſs to ſup with him is that revolting ſubject *Don John*, which we have been obliged to ſay too much of already.

Of the name of HOWARD we have three authors, EDWARD, JAMES, and ſir ROBERT, all gentlemen of fortune and family, though it does not appear, whatever might have been ſaid to the contrary, that they were related. There is nothing very particular mentioned of their fortunes; and, though they each of them wrote for the ſtage, except one hit, their works are very little known, I allude to The *Committee, or the Faithful Iriſhman.*

This comedy was written by ſir ROBERT HOWARD, and ſucceeded very greatly on account of its being a play for the times, for it was intended to caſt an odium on the Round Heads and their party, which certainly the abſurd fanaticiſm, mixed with indecent pride, in Mr. and Mrs. DAY and ABEL has completely effected. The idea of TEAGUE was taken from his own ſervant who was ſent to ENGLAND to releaſe ſir ROBERT's ſon from priſon, where he was at the ſuit of government; and having ſucceeded, inſtead of going immediately to his maſter on his return to IRELAND, he ſtaid a fort-

night to ſpread the news and get drunk among his friends for joy.

The remainder of the dramatic pieces written by this gentleman are called, The *Blind Lady*, The *Surprizal*, The *Veſtal Virgin*, The *Indian Queen*, The *Great Favourite*, and The *Conqueſt of China by the Tartars*; none of which have any thing in them very remarkable, except the *Veſtal Virgin*, which has two cataſtrophes; one ending happy, and the other tragical, ſo that the play may be performed either way according to the choice of the audience.

The plays written by EDWARD HOWARD are, The *Uſurper*, *Six Days Adventure*, *Woman's Conqueſt*, *Man of New Market*, The *Change of Crowns*, The *London Gentleman*, and the *United Kingdom*, none of which we learn much of, and ſome of them were never printed. *Six Days Adventure* ſeems to have had ſome merit, for it excited lord ROCHESTER's envy and ill nature; two qualities very irritable in this ſarcaſtic humouriſt.

JAMES HOWARD wrote *All Miſtaken*, The *Engliſh Monſieur*, and *Romeo and Juliet*. The firſt of theſe is a comedy, and may be found in DODSLEY's collection of old Plays. It has a great

deal of ſprightlineſs, and ſhews indeed that he was the beſt dramatic author of the three, though he has written leſs than the others. The ſecond has merit, but it has plenty of defects, and is that very comedy that the duke of BUCKINGHAM ridiculed in the *Rehearſal*, in the circumſtance of prince VOLSIUS and the ſingle boot. In the third, this gentleman tried the effect of his name-ſake's experiment, for he altered *Romeo and Juliet* ſo as to make it end happily, and by this expedient DAVENANT gave it a run, repreſenting it according to SHAKESPEAR and according to HOWARD alternately.

Lord FALKLAND was an amateur rather than a writer, but his ſpirit and inclination to protect and patronize genius have made him the theme of many a poet's ſincere panegyric. He is entitled to a place here having written one play which was called The *Marriage Night*, and which is ſaid to have contained a great ſhare of wit and ſatire. There is but one opinion of this amiable and benevolent nobleman, and the trueſt teſt of his virtues is that he was regretted after his death by many who felt the good effects of his bounty when living.

There is nothing that diſtinguiſhes the life of ſir GEORGE ETHERIDGE from the other men of plea-

ſure in his time, except that, though he was as fond of the ſame purſuits, he had more principle. We ſee no groſs violation of honour, no ſhameleſs impiety in him; for, in his freeſt moments of levity, there was an elegance of ſentiment, and his conduct was always gallantry but rarely libertiniſm. His works are dangerous, for they are full of licentiouſneſs; and, though his images are true, they are too lively and glowing, particularly for either the ear or the eye of young females; therefore his comedies, which are in other reſpects well written and a ſtrong picture of elegant life, have long diſappeared from the ſtage.

The *Comical Revenge*, *She Would if ſhe Could*, and The *Man of* Mode, are the titles of his plays; and, except that the firſt is written partly in heroic verſe, an examination of one would ſerve for all. They are lively and engaging, and exhibit a faithful picture of nature; but it is nature in her looſeſt attire, and when none love to court her but the licentious. SHADWELL ſpeaks highly of *She Would if ſhe Could*, though DENNIS ſays it was barbarouſly treated by the audience. The *Man of* Mode is certainly the beſt play; in which the characters of DORIMANT and ſir FOPLING FLUTTER are maſterly drawn, and highly coloured; but the objection

of indecency and indecorum applies to this play as well as the others, a circumſtance highly in favour of CIBBER, whoſe fine gentleman and fops are well finiſhed copies from the paintings of ETHERIDGE.

Mrs. PHILIPS, or, according the to title of her poems, "the moſt deſervedly admired Mrs. "CATHERINE PHILIPS, the matchleſs ORINDA," wrote two tragedies called *Pompey*, and *Horace*. There is nothing ſo eaſy as for ladies to acquire the poſſeſſion of a little negative fame who are flattered into an idea that they can write. As for thoſe whoſe minds are ſo male that they might as well be male in every other reſpect, that decide upon the rights of nations and mankind, and pretinaciouſly obtrude themſelves into a province for which they cannot be qualified either by nature or education, one readily pities them exactly as one commiſerates any other deſcription of the inſane*; but when it

* Doctor JOHNSON, who was an admirable lurcher at watching for an opportunity to revenge himſelf, had been long an admirer of Mrs MACAULEY; but finding her get almoſt as dogmatic as himſelf, and ſeeing plainly that he might dine with her to all eternity without being able to convince her, was determined to cut her up at once by lowering her pride completely; for which purpoſe he one day artfully drew her into converſation upon her favourite topic the rights of man, in which were of courſe included liberty and equality. In proportion as ſhe expatiated ſo he appeared to become her proſelyte;

goes no further than a few fond utopian notions, such as celibacy, or platonic tenderneſs, eſpecially when the characters are pretty notorious, one ſmiles and permits the dear creatures to flatter themſelves and be flattered by others into an empty fame, to the great diſorder of their families and the total neglect of the ſhirts and ſtockings.

As to the lady in queſtion, ſhe ſeems to have been in circumſtances beyond the general run of lady writers, and therefore, as ſhe had nothing elſe to do, there was no more good or harm in her ſtuffing her head full of her own poetry than the poetry of other people. Her moſt celebrated work, however, is in proſe, and conſiſts of a ſeries of letters ſhe wrote to ſir CHARLES COTTEREL, under the title of *Letters from Orinda to Poliarchus*, and we are commanded to believe, though the friendſhip of thoſe letters is ſomething warmer than the love of people in general, that "they are an intercourſe "between two perſons of different ſexes managed "with delight and innocence," to which I ſhall only ſay that if the huſband was ſatisfied nobody elſe had a right to complain.

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till at laſt, feigning to be worked into a proper pitch, "madam", ſaid "he, you are perfectly right, I am your convert, all mankind ought "to be equal. John ſet down to dinner with us."

The two tragedies by Mrs. PHILIPS are tranſlations from CORNEILLE. *Horace* was left unfiniſhed and afterwards ſupplied with a fifth act by ſir JOHN DENHAM. It was performed by perſons of quality at court with a prologue ſpoken by the duke of Monmouth. COTTON had tranſlated the ſame play ſix years before, which induced the world to believe that Mrs. PHILIPS had taken advantage of his play; but the fact is, they were both very nearly from the French, and CORNEILLE, if not injured, would look well in any language. As to *Pompee* I have already ſhewn that it begat a ſparring match between this lady and Mr. WALLER; and, as all the world of gallantry at that time ſwore and maintained that the Leſbian SAPHO, and the Roman SULPITIA were nothing to Mrs. PHILIPS, the double rhimes of poor WALLER were of courſe decried to nothing, and the double entendres of the lady extolled to the ſkies.

GEORGE VILLIERS, duke of Buckingham, was ſon to that famous ſtateſman and favourite of CHARLES the firſt, who too fatally inſpired his maſter with the weakneſs of JAMES, and who, in return, loſt his life by the hands of FELTON. The character of BUCKINGHAM, of whom we are ſpeaking, was exactly ſimilar to all thoſe men of

diſtinction about CHARLES the ſecond; who, in compliance with the follies and vices of that weak and profligate monarch, threw a veil of French licentiouſneſs over that ſplendour of Engliſh talents which would otherwiſe have adorned this reign of unavailing merit and perverted genius.

CHARLES the ſecond, unfortunately for the kingdom, drew in French folly with his milk. The bulk of his adherents, who were his followers in his diſtreſs, and his companions in his exile, by the example of their principal, perfected themſelves in thoſe principles moſt congenial to his wiſhes upon the ſpot where ſuch an education was practically taught. In conſequence of this they all returned to ENGLAND accompliſhed French courtiers, and hence aroſe the ſuperficial taſte and unprincipled levity that eclipſed every thing meritorious, and ridiculed every thing honourable.

This BUCKINGHAM did his utmoſt, to ſay the truth of him, to connive at. He was a weak, irreſolute, unprincipled man; but the ſtrongeſt mark of his character was ingratitude, particularly to the king, againſt whom he was for ever ſtudying every ſort of miſchief. In ſhort, he lived in miſerable ſplendour, an object of torment and vexation to

himſelf and every body elſe, and died, like ROCHESTER, and indeed moſt unprincipled characters, afraid of his conſcience.

BUCKINGHAM wrote, as all the world knows, the famous burleſque comedy called the *Rehearſal;* a piece in its way that never was equaled. Its drift was by no means unfair, though he gave himſelf a licence which he ſometimes made an improper uſe of. Bombaſt and fuſtian in heroic rhime were certainly fair objects for ſatire, but it was the affectation of the reigning taſte, the origin of which I have juſt ſhewn, that created this perverſion of talents, and it would have been wiſer to have reformed it altogether than to have ridiculed men who could not have dined had they not proſtituted their merit.

DUFFET was a kind of ſtage adventurer, who, fancying he had a turn for dramatic poetry, and finding his works generally hiſſed into oblivion, determined to take ſome other courſe to induce a good reception of his pieces. That which he hit on was ingenious enough, and ſeems to have been the ground work of a ſimilar expedient afterwards practiſed with great ſucceſs in France. In ſhort, DUFFET, finding it impoſſible to write any thing he

did not expoſe to ridicule, thought it leſs mortifying to ridicule the productions of others, and thus as faſt as a piece made its appearance at the Duke's theatre, he parodied it at the King's. His own plays which ſcarcely deſerve notice were called The *Spaniſh Rogue*, The *Empreſs of Morocco*, and *Beauty's Triumph*. The reſt were written to ridicule other authors, and, to ſhew what an appropriate choice he made, the whole force of his ſatire is levelled at SHAKESPEAR and SHADWELL.

RYMER, whoſe character as a critic is differently drawn, who by ſome is thought to have written on the productions of authors with truth, diſcernment, candour, and diſcrimination, but by many more with aſperity, ignorance, envy, and malignity, wrote one bad tragedy called *Edgar*.

SUCKLING, a perfect gentleman, who, by the advantages of birth, perſon, education, genius, and fortune, would probably have arrived to conſiderable eminence as a literary character had not death untimely cut him off at the age of twenty-eight, wrote four plays himſelf, and patronized many others.

His plays are publiſhed together with his poems, ſpeeches, tracts and letters; and by theſe it is very

eaſy to deſcern that he had ſtrong genius and much poetical grace, which would have matured his labours probably, had he lived into ſomething more accomplſhed; but there is evidently every where marks of youth and inexperience, although WALLER certainly had him in view, for what was ſtudy and art in WALLER, was eaſe and nature in SUCKLING.

The firſt of SUCKLING's plays was called The *Diſcontented Colonel*, but in that ſtate it was only a ſketch of what he afterwards enlarged into a tragedy called *Brenoralt*. The *Goblins*, 1646, which DODSLEY has publiſhed in his collection, has ſome very ſtrong traits of merit. SUCKLING ſeems to have had a variety of things in his head when he conceived the plot, and he has not at any time loſt ſight of the *Tempeſt*; but it cannot be ſaid in any part to be ſo much plagiary as a general imitation of the ſame ſort of ſtyle, and this only in the characters; for there is a novelty in the incidents that might be rendered very pleaſing.

Aglaura, 1646, ſeems to have been imitated by HOWARD in his *Veſtal Virgin*; not as to the ſubject but on account of its having a happy and a tragic cataſtrophe. The *Sad One* was left unfiniſhed,

but it is a ſketch in which may be ſeen a good deal of the maſter. *Brenoralt* was his laſt but it has not the greateſt merit, and, upon the whole, the *Goblins* is the beſt play. To that I refer thoſe who cannot readily get at his whole works, in which will be found if not great perfection at leaſt great promiſe, and it is very much to be regretted the world loſt ſo early in life a genius ſo likely to contribute to its pleaſure, and a man ſo qualified to embelliſh its ſociety.

CHAP VII.

DUKE AND DUCHESS OF NEWCASTLE, CARELL, HAUSTED, GLAPTHORNE, CAREW, AND OTHER WRITERS TO THE NUMBER OF MORE THAN A HUNDRED AND TWENTY.

As ſo many dramatic authors yet remain to be mentioned who diſappeared before the Revolution, my account of them muſt neceſſarily be very brief, and indeed it would be an intruſion on the reader were it otherwiſe, for it ſhould ſeem that every thing that was brought to the theatres, good and bad, was inſtantly produced, and therefore a great deal of it was of courſe inſufferable traſh. To ſay truth, it is leſs a matter of aſtoniſhment than curioſity that out of nearly five hundred dramatic pieces which were written by various authors in ſomething more than thirty years, except a very few, perhaps ten, and thoſe in an altered ſtate, the ſtage is a total ſtranger to the whole catalogue.

William Cavendish, duke of Newcaſtle, whoſe remarkable attachment to James the firſt, Charles the firſt and Charles the ſecond, for which he obtained his titles and honours, outwent all their other adherents, who with aſtoning equanimity of temper ſuſtained many extraordinary viciſſitudes of fortune, and who among other proofs of his merit was highly gifted and elegantly accompliſhed, wrote four comedies, which were called The *Country Captain*, *Variety*, The *Triumphant Widow*, and The *Humourous Lovers*. Theſe plays have been a good deal extolled; perhaps becauſe the author was a duke. They are paſſable, and no doubt he who wrote them held them in no better eſteem; for poetry, though he was a noble patron and ſtrongly encouraged and promoted the intereſt of literature, never ſo obtruded itſelf as to diſturb his public occupations. The *Triumphant Widow* had good materials, and ſo perfectly was Shadwell of his mind, that many parts of his *Bury Fair* are literally tranſcribed from it.

If the Duke, however, did not let poetry improperly engroſs his time, the Ducheſs to be even with him ſubmitted to hardly any other occupation. She married the Duke, then Marquis of Newcastle, when they were both in exile. They re-

turned together after completely conquering their troubles, and lived in the greateſt harmony and comfort many years. Her plays are in number twenty-ſeven, all which are extant, and ſome of them not without merit; but they are in ſo indigeſted a ſtate, ſome being ſketches, others not divided into acts, and in many other reſpects ſo unfit for repreſentation, that as they do not ſeem to have been intended for the ſtage, or to have appeared on it, ſo it is perfectly certain they never will be repreſented except inparts as Mrs. Dye ſays, "at ſecond hand."

The titles of theſe plays, if they may be ſo called, are *Love's Adventures*, two parts, The *Several Wits*, *Youth's Glory and Death's Banquet*, two parts, The *Lady's Contemplation*, two parts, The *Wit's Cabal*, two parts, The *Unnatural Tragedy*, The *Public Wooing*, *Matrimonial Troubles*, two parts, *Nature's three Daughters*, *Beauty*, *Love*, *and Wit*, two parts, The *Religious*, The *Comical Taſk*, *Bell in Campo*, two parts, The *Apocryphal Ladies*, The *Female Academy*, The *Convent of Pleaſure*, The *Sociable Companions*, The *Preſence*, The *Bridals*, and The *Blazing World*, two parts.

Carell who, that he might reſemble moſt of

the favourites of CHARLES the ſecond, was a complete courtier and an indifferent writer, produced ſeven plays which, we are told, were acted with conſiderable applauſe, their titles were The *Deſerving Favourite*, *Avirigus* and *Phileda*, The *Paſſionate Lover*, The *Fool Would be a Favourite*, *Oſmond the Great Turk*, *Heraclitus*, and the *Spartan Ladies*. The applauſe theſe plays received was from the king and the court, before whom they were acted privately. They are chiefly tranſlations from other authors, and *Haraclitus* is a tranſlation from CORNEILLE.

HAUSTED was a cotemporary and boon-companion of RANDOLPH. He wrote two dramatic pieces called The *Rival Friends*, and *Senile Odium*, which met with very little ſucceſs though hiſtorians, and particularly LANGBAINE and WOOD, give this author the character of a good poet.

GLAPTHORNE, whom WINSTANLEY calls one of the chiefeſt poets in the reign of CHARLES the firſt, has left nothing to be remembered by but five plays, for, though he wrote nine, four of them were never printed. The titles of theſe plays are *Argalus and Parthenia*, *Albertus Wallenſtein*, The *Ladies Privilege*, The *Hollander*, *Wit in a Conſtable*, The

Parricide, The *Veſtal*, The *Noble Trial*, and the *Ducheſs of Fernandina*. The materials for theſe plays were ſupplied from ſir PHILIP SIDNEY's *Arcadia* and other things, but they were ſhort lived, and are now forgotten.

CAREW was a celebrated wit in the reign of CHARLES the firſt, and wrote at his expreſs command, a maſque called *Cœlum Britannicum*. The muſic of this maſque was compoſed by HENRY LAWES, and the decorations were invented by INIGO JONES. DAVENPORT, of whoſe private character we know nothing, wrote *A new Trick to Cheat the Devil*, *King John*, and *Matilda*, The *City Night Cap*, The *Pedlar*, The *Pirate*, The *Fatal Brothers*, The *Polite Queen*, and The *Woman's Miſtaken*. the firſt three were printed. They are taken from OVID, BOCCACE, and other writers, and two of them are in part retailed in RAVENSCROFT's *London Cuckolds*.

Baron who wrote two dramatic pieces, and to whom, but I believe without the leaſt truth, are attributed four more and ſeveral interludes, was converſant with men of talents, and particularly intimate with the celebrated HOWELL, who the reader may remember was a great traveller, and among whoſe letters

one epiſtle is addreſſed to this author. His pieces are called *Deorum Dona*, *Gripus and Hegio*, and *Mirza*. Thoſe that are attributed to him are *Dick Scorner*, *Don Quixote*, *Deſtruction of Jeruſalem*, and *Marriage of Wit and Science*. They were none of them ever acted.

Peaps. It is not certain that any ſuch author ever lived, or if he lived, whether he wrote a play. There is a play, however, called *Love in an Extacy*, with this name to it, and the only extraordinary circumſtance relative to it is that it has coſt more controverſy about it than the play is worth. Cox had very ſlender pretenſions to be conſidered as an author, his whole merit having conſiſted of taking diverting circumſtances from various plays and forming them into farces and drolls; which, being a good actor, he was well qualified to do. This patched work buſineſs is not of ſufficient importance to merit the reader's attention, and, therefore, I ſhall diſmiſs it without enumerating the titles of this maſs of mummery, a much larger catalogue of which were printed by Kirkman after the Reſtoration.

I ſhall now get on with my catalogue of authors who, though not all dramatic hounds that hunted,

made a part of thoſe that filled up the cry. MABBE tranſlated The *Spaniſh Bawd*, RUGGLES wrote *Ignoramus*, GOFFE, who we are told was a clergyman, a perfect Socrates, and had a Xantippe for a wife, wrote The *Raging Turk*, The *Courageous Turk*, *Oreſtes*, and The *Careleſs Shepherdeſs*. Theſe plays were only performed by ſcholars at the Univerſity. They are full of bombaſtic rant. A character ſays in a ſtorm to the meteors that ſurround him, "Why "do ye put on perriwigs of fire?" KNEVET wrote a piece called *Rhonon and Iris*.

FLETCHER produced one drama called *Sicelides*. DREW we know nothing of, except upon the books of the Stationer's Company where there is his name as the author of two pieces called The *Life of the Ducheſs of Suffolk*, and The *Woman's Miſtaken*. MARMION did not live in the ſame obſcurity; for one of his plays, The *Antiquary*, is publiſhed in DODSLEY's collection, and he wrote three others with ſome reputation. Their titles are *Holland's Leaguer*, The *Fine Companion* and The *Crafty Merchant*. GOMERSALL was a clergyman and wrote *Lodowick Sforza, Duke of Milan*. FISHER wrote *Fuimus Troas*, publiſhed by DODSLEY. JONES wrote a miſerable piece called *Adraſta*.

NABBES was conſidered a fifth rate poet by

CIBBER, whoſe determination was pretty right for he wrote eight plays, which, except one, are forgotten. Their titles are *Microcoſmus*, preſerved in DODSLEY's collection, *Hannibal and Scipio*, *Covent Garden*, *Spring's Glory*, *Entertainment on the Prince's Birth Day*, *Tottenham Court*, *Unfortunate Mother*, and The *Bride*. RUTTER wrote The *Shepherd's Holiday*, and tranſlated the *Cid*. SAMSON wrote The *Vow Breaker*, and The *Woman's Prize*, on which, applicable as the titles might be, he did not allude to SAMSON of old, diſcovering his ſtrength to DALILA, or her delivering him up to the Philiſtines. JAQUES wrote the The *Queen of Corſica*. SPEED, the ſon of the chronologer, wrote a piece called *Stonehenge*. WILDER, a diſſenting prieſt, wrote a piece called Tne *Bonefire*. KIRKE wrote The *Seven Champions of Chriſtendom*.

HENRY SHIRLEY wrote The *Martyred Soldier*, The *Duke of Lerma*, The *Duke of Guiſe*, The *Dumb Bawd*, and *Gialdo the Conſtant Lover*. Only the firſt of theſe pieces was printed. CARTWRIGHT, who manifeſted very extraordinary talents, and whoſe premature death deprived the world of much pleaſure and improvement, for he, like ſir JOHN SUCKLING, died at eight and twenty, wrote The *Royal Slave*, The *Lady Erant*, The *Ordinary*, which laſt may be found in DODSLEY's collection, and has

conſiderable merit, and The *Siege*. His plays, poems, and other literary productions were held in ſuch eſteem that they were uſhered into the world by fifty-two copies of commendatory verſes. LOWER, was a great admirer of the French authors, and in imitation of them, wrote *Phœnix in Flames*, *Polyeuctes*. *Horatius*, The *Enchanted Lovers*, *Noble Ingratitude*, *Amorous Phantaſm*. MAYNE wrote The *City Match*, a very good play amongſt DODSLEY's collection, and *Amorous War*.

BERKELEY wrote The *Loſt Lady*. RAWLINS, who was rich, and wrote merely for pleaſure, produced *Rebellion*, *Tom Eſſence*, and *Tunbridge Wells*. GOUGH wrote a piece called The *Strange Diſcovery*. SADLER, who was a learned man, and in high church preferment, wrote a maſque called The *Subject's Joy for the King's Reſtoration*. CHAMBERLAIN. There are two authors of this name. One wrote The *Swaggering Damſel*, and the other *Love's Victory*, the title of which was changed to, *Wit Led by the Noſe*. SHARP wrote a play called The *Noble Stranger*. TATHAM, City Poet to CHARLES the firſt, wrote *Love Crowns the End*, The *Diſtracted State*, *Scot's Vagaries* and The *Rump*. HABINGTON wrote a tragedy called The *Queen of Arragon*, BRAITHWAITE, *Mercurius Britannicus*, and *Regecidium*;

RHODES brought out a piece called *Flora's Vagaries;* and RICHARD wrote a play called *Maſſalina, or the Roman Empreſs.*

BUCKHEAD wrote a play on the ſubject of the Iriſh Rebellion, called *Cola's Fury.* BURROUGHS had a play entered on the Stationer's books in 1646, called *Fatal Friendſhip.* Sir RICHARD FANSHAW, who attached himſelf very firmly to CHARLES the firſt, and watched the fortune of CHARLES the ſecond with zeal and fidelity, returned with him to ENGLAND, conducted his marriage with the INFANTA of PORTUGAL, and afterwards rendered himſelf very uſeful to his maſter's affairs in SPAIN, where he died, wrote, or rather tranſlated *Il Paſtor Fido, Querer per ſolo querer, Fieſtes de Aranjuez* and The *Faithful Shepherdeſs.* It does not appear, however, that any of theſe pieces were performed. SHEPPARD wrote a party play called The *Committee-Man Curried.* NEEDHAM alſo wrote a party play called The *Levellers Levelled.* SHERBURNE was a good ſoldier and faithful to the royal party. He produced three tragedies called *Medea, Troades,* and *Phedra and Hyppolitus.*

QUARLES, "who," ſays LANGBAINE, "mixed "religion and fancy together, and never offended

"againſt his duty to GOD, his neighbour, or him-"ſelf," wrote, according to the ſame panegyriſt, an innocent inoffenſive play called The *Virgin Widow*. WASE was a ſchoolmaſter, and by way of keeping up his Greek tranſlated *Electra* from SOPHOCLES. MANUCHE was an Italian, and had a commiſſion under Prince RUPERT, and, getting acquainted with HART, grew fond of the drama and wrote three plays called The *Juſt General*, The *Loyal Lovers*, and The *Baſtard*. PRESTWICH wrote a tragedy called *Hypollitus*. WILLEN produced a kind of paſtoral called *Aſtrea*. GEFFRY was the author of a play called The *Bugbears*. GOLDSMITH imitated from *Hugo Grotius* a kind of ſacred drama called *Sophompancas*. WILSON, a ſtrange irreſolute character, who wrote the life of JAMES the firſt in a way not very favourable to that monarch, was the author of The *Switzer*, The *Corporal*, and The *Inconſtant Lady*.

HEMMINGS, ſon of HEMMINGS the actor, wrote two plays which are tolerably well ſpoken of. They are called The *Fatal Contract*, and The *Jews Tragedy*. FORMIDO. Under this name a play was entered at Stationer's Hall called The *Governor*. Dr. MEAD, not the famous phyſician of that name who wrote on poiſons, but one whoſe medicines were

perfectly innofenſive if they were of a piece with his play, wrote a comedy called The *Combat of Love and Friendſhip*. Howell. the great traveller and linguiſt, was author of a maſque called *Nuptials of Peleus* and *Thetis*. Alexander Brome, a lawyer, and the publiſher of the plays of Brome, Jonson's pupil, laid claim to a play himſelf called The *Cunning Lovers*. Rider is known by having written a play called The *Twins*, Dr. Strode, an eminent preacher, wrote The *Floating Iſland*. Freeman who, to avoid the troubles in the reign of Charles the firſt, concealed himſelf in retirement, wrote a play by way of amuſing himſelf, for we have never heard that it amuſed any body elſe, called *Imperiale*. Stanley tranſlated The *Clouds* from Aristophanes. D'Ouvilly is ſet down as the author of a play called The *Falſe Favourite Diſgraced*. Meriton who has been cenſured by Langbaine as the dulleſt of all authors that ever were, or ever ſhall be, and convicted of not underſtanding his own writings, has left two contemptible plays to be remembered by. They are called *Love and War*, and The *Wandering Lovers*. Swinhoe, an indifferent writer, produced one play called The *Unhappy Fair Irene*.

Lovelace was a good ſubject and ſoldier, but

his ſervices were ill requited, and he died poor and neglected. He wrote two plays, the titles of which might juſtly ſpeak his own eulogium. They are called The *Scholar* and The *Soldier*. NEVILLE wrote a party thing called *Shuffling, Cutting, and Dealing, in a Game of Piquet, being acted from the Year* 1653 *to* 1658, *by Oliver Protector and others.* FORDE produced a piece called *Love's Labyrinth.* PORDAGE, a man of no note, is ſaid to be the author of The *Troades, Herold and Mariamne*, and The *Siege of Babylon.* DANCER tranſlated from TASSO, CORNEILLE, and QUINAULT, *Aminta Nicomede*, and *Agrippa.* SADLER, not the ſame already mentioned, was author of a ſtrange farago called *Maſquerade du Ciel.* Sir ROBERT le GREEVE wrote a play called *Nothing Impoſſible to Love.* FOUNTAIN, a private gentleman, wrote a play for his amuſement, called The *Rewards of Virtue*, which SHADWELL brought forward with great ſucceſs under the title of The *Royal Shepherdeſs.*

HEAD, who was ſometimes an author, and ſometimes a bookſeller, and who at laſt was caſt away near the Iſle of Wight, where he had intended to take refuge from his creditors, wrote an excentric piece called *Hic et Ubique.* Sir ROBERT STAPLETON, who adhered to the royal cauſe, and lived com-

fortably after the Reſtoration, wrote the *Slighted Maid*, The *Step Mother*, and *Hero and Leander*. PORTER, a major in the royal army, and another aſſociate of HART and MOHUN, produced The *Villain*, and The *Carnival*. GREENE wrote the *Politician Cheated*. Sir SAMUEL TUKE, an active officer for CHARLES the firſt, was author of a play of ſome merit, which may be ſeen in DODSLEY's collection. It is called The *Adventures of Five Hours*. HOLDEN, an obſcure anthor, wrote a play called The *Ghoſts*.

HOOLE, a learned author, but not conſpicuous in life, tranſlated all the plays of TERENCE. BULTREL, who was private ſecretary of lord CLARENDON, wrote a play called *Amorous Orontus*. CARPENTER, "who," ſays WOOD, "was a fantaſtical "man and changed his mind with his cloaths, and that "for his juggles and tricks, in matters of religion, "was eſteemed a theological mountebank," produced The *Pragmatical Jeſuit, new Leavened*. Lord BRISTOL, who led a life of perfect contradiction, who, as WALPOLE ſays, wrote againſt Popery and embraced it, who, in proſecuting lord STRAFFORD was converted, and who unconciouſly was a proſecutor of lord CLARENDON, who was brave and unſucceſsful, and, who to keep up his excentricity, to

day inveighed againſt the ſtage and to-morrow wrote for it, has left a play called *Elvira*. DOWER, a poor unfortunate Grub-ſtreet author, with decent abilities, produced a play which was, nevertheleſs, bad enough, called The *Salopian Squire*.

CARYL brought out The *Engliſh Princeſs*, a tragedy, and *Sir Solomon*, a comedy, 1671, which laſt was a tranſlation from MOLIERE's *Ecole de Femmes*. This muſt have been early in life, for it is the ſame CARYL who recommended to POPE the ſubject of the *Rape of the Lock*. He died in 1717, at which time he muſt have been a very old man. WESTON wrote a play called The *Amazonian Queen*. BAILEY, a barriſter, wrote The *Spightful Siſter*. St. SERFE, who in quality of a ſpy ran great perſonal riſk in the wars of CHARLES the firſt, publiſhed a play called *Tarugo's Wiles*, which is well ſpoken of by LANGBAINE, and complimented in verſe by lord DORSET. MEDBURN, an actor, who was concerned in the plot of TITUS OATES, and who died in Newgate, tranſlated MOLIERE's *Tartuffe*.

BOOTHBY produced a play called *Marcelia*; and STROUDE wrote a play called *All Plot, or the Diſguiſes*. Theſe two writers are ſcarcely known. COTTON however, who follows, is pretty celebrated.

Every body knows his famous *Troveſtie*, and his *Wonders of the Peak*. In this laſt poem he ſo indulged his vein for ridicule, which in him was irriſiſtible, that he loſt four hundred a year by an old aunt whoſe peculiarities he thought proper to expoſe. He was a very companionable character, and therefore of courſe his acquaintance was courted *. His title to notice here ariſes from his having tranſlated CORNEILLE's *Horace*. JOYNER, a man very much beloved by his private friends, perhaps better than by the Muſes, wrote a play called The *Roman Empreſs*. REVETT, an author of very inconſiderable talents, produced a very indifferent play called The *Town Shifts*. CORYE was author of a piece called The *Generous Enemies*. TUKE produced a ſtrange piece under the title, firſt, *Of the Soul's Warfare, comically divided into Scenes*, and afterwards, The *Divine Comedian*. An author hardly known, of the name of ARROWSMITH, is ſaid to have written a piece called The *Reformation*.

* COTTON is ſaid to have had ſuch influence over a prelate of that time that his lordſhip would liſten to no recommendation that did not come ſupported by this wit. A clergyman having by this means loſt a valuable living, complained to a friend of the ill treatment he had received, and ſtated the pretenſions in favour of which he had ſolicited for the benefice. "Oh," ſaid the friend. "tis no "wonder his lordſhip did not hear you, his ears were ſtuffed full of "cotton."

A wit in the reign of CHARLES the ſecond, named PAYNE, wrote two tragedies and a comedy. Their titles are The *Fatal Jealouſy*, The *Siege of Conſtantinople*, and The *Morning Ramble*. The latter is not without merit. WRIGHT, a barriſter, wrote two indifferent pieces called *Shyeſtes*, and *Mock Thyeſtes*. FANE, whoſe wit and talents LANGBAINE ſpeaks of in the higheſt terms, wrote *Love in the Dark*, *Sacrifice*, and a *Maſque*. BELON is known by nothing but one play, which LANGBAINE publiſhed under the title of The *Mock Dueliſt*. LESLEY, a frigid divine, threw away ſo much pains as to write in the reign of CHARLES the ſecond, three ſacred dramas called *Dives's Doom*, *Fire and Brimſtone*, and *Abraham's Faith*.

SMITH. There were two dramatic authors of this name before the Reſtoration; neither, however, is very celebrated. One wrote *Hector of Germany*, *Freeman's Honour*, and *St. George for England*, and the other a comedy called *Cythera*. LEANARD, on whom LANGBAINE falls in a furious way for ſtealing, at the ſame moment, by the bye, that he he himſelf pilfers the very compariſon by which he illuſtrates his argument, that of "Gipſies ſtealing children to excite compaſſion," which remark, though original long before LANGBAINE, two

eminent wits have not disdained to retail again, one in a poem, the other in a dramatic piece, did not quite deserve all the rancour levelled at him by this detector of plagiaries, because he was in this no further guilty than many others whom LANGBAINE has quietly permitted to pass muster. LEANARD published two plays called *Country Innocence*, and and *Rambling Justice*, which are evidently made up from BREWER's *Country Girl*, and MIDDLETON's *More Dissemblers besides Women*; but he produced another under the title of The *Counterfeits*; which, though it is of Spanish extraction, certainly furnished CIBBER with *She Would and She Would Not*.

JOHNS a schoolmaster, wrote a play with the title of The *Traytor to Himself*. COOKE, an author little known, produced *Love's Triumph*. SHIPMAN, one of the wits of CHARLES the second, of whom COWLEY has spoken handsomely, left a tragedy called *Henry the third of France*, in which, however, that wit he is said to have possessed in conversation is very little apparent. ECCLESTONE, who thought perhaps the licentious age in which he lived deserved some signal proof of divine vengeance, wrote *Noah'r Flood*. MAIDWELL, a schoolmaster, was author of The *Loving Enemies*, a comedy. WHITAKER published The *Conspiracy, or Change of Government*.

FISHBURNE was ſaid to have written in conjunction with the profligate ROCHESTER, a vile production under the title of *Sodom;* ROCHESTER, however, diſclaimed having any hand in it, and thus all the infamy recoiled on the head of FISHBURNE. Some ſay he meant it as a ſatire by way of trying how far he might proceed in licentiouſneſs.

SAUNDERS a very young writer, who gave great promiſe, produced *Tamerline the Great*, to which DRYDEN wrote an epilogue. We learn by it that the author was a mere boy *. We know nothing of him, however, beyond this play, ſo that it is very probable he died ſoon afterwards. TUCHIN, who

* An author ſays that DRYDEN did SAUNDERS the honour to write this Epilogue; indeed he calls it a Prologue. We know that DRYDEN ſold Prologues and Epilogues, and that the price was two guineas to the players, and three to an author. The following eight lines will ſhew he was a good advocate.

Ladies the beardleſs author of this day
Commends to you the fortune of his play:
A woman wit has often graced the ſtage,
But he's the firſt boy-poet of our age.
Early as is the year his fancies blow
Like young narciſſcus peeping through the ſnow;
Thus COWLEY bloſſomed ſoon and flouriſhed long.
This is as forward and may prove as ſtrong.

bears the character of a venal and paltry writer, one who for his adulation was ſometimes rewarded, and and for his ſcurility ſometimes beaten, or publicly puniſhed *, was the author of a pitiful production called The *Unfortunate Shepherd.*

Lady WHARTON, a relation of ROCHESTER, was flattered into an opinion that ſhe could write, "for," ſays WALLER, "ſhe and ROCHESTER were "allied in genius as well as in blood," and taught to fancy that, in a curious and extraordinary production which has been long forgotton, ſhe wrote a play. It was called *Love's Martyr, or Wit above Crowns.* JEVON, author, actor, and dancing maſter, wrote a play which is the foundation of COFFEE's farce of The *Devil to Pay*, and in which he is ſuppoſed to have been aſſiſted by SHADWELL, who was his brother-in-law. Its title was The *Devil of a Wife.*

Having now gone through a very neceſſary,

* He was proſecuted for a poetical work, and being convicted, JEFFREYS ſentenced him to be whipped through ſeveral market towns. To avoid this puniſhment, he petitioned the king to be hanged; but, his ſuit not being granted, and the whipping being inflicted, after the king's death he wrote a moſt bitter invective againſt him. He was always getting into ſcrapes; and, at laſt died in a miſerable condition in conſequence of a ſevere beating he received for having abuſed ſome tories.

though I am afraid not a very interesting part of my work, I have now so cleared my ground that I may bring forward authors of better eminence, at the head of which groupe, as the reader will readily agree with me, stands DRYDEN.

CHAP VIII.

DRYDEN.

The chequered life, opinions, character, and conduct of Dryden, might furniſh an examination of extraordinary length which, in the hands of a candid ſcrutinizer, would be found, like this poets own writing, to conſiſt of beauties that will be admired for ever, and blemiſhes that ſoon fade away.

Dryden ſeems to have come forward into the world very peaceably, and to have deliberated on the part he was to ſuſtain in life with a view, when he ſhould find himſelf perfect, to ſubmit his merit to the opinion of the public; but he lived in an age of literary warfare, and he ſoon found that, as he muſt infallibly expoſe to the world the reigning folly by manifeſting thoſe talents which others wanted, he ſhould be ſurrounded by vanity, ignorance, and envy, and aſſailed by all the ſlander reſulting from ſuch malignant paſſions.

Had he made his election at once, inſtead of treading upon theſe reptiles, to have paſſed by without noticing them at all, they would have retired confounded; his foibles would not have been blazoned into faults; nor his faults magnified into vices. He would have appeared upon a par with other human beings in indiſcretion and frailty, but ſuperior to them in thoſe nobler qualities with which nature rarely vouchſafes to endow the mind of man; but this requires a firmneſs, and a philoſophy but little known to us; and, though paſſiveneſs in ſuch caſes may be prudence, it is not nature. To return good for evil, taking it literally, is a virtue, but there is a ſpice of quixotiſm in it and unfortunately it was not in DRYDEN's way to conquer windmills but to elucidate truth. In ſhort, though a wonderful writer, he was a mere man, ſubject to all the paſſions and failings incident to his fellow creatures, and thus we ſee him immortalize dunces by condeſcending to notice them, and degrading himſelf almoſt to their level by a ridiculous contention for a little cotemporary praiſe.

It were well if this were the worſt. Contention begets aſperity; till, at length, a man receives into his own nature qualities that are not congenial to it. Intending only to explain, he gets into recrimi-

nation, and deſerts his own defence by vilifying his adverſary; and thus, having condeſcended to abuſe, he is upon a footing with his dirty competitor. Human nature here gets another ſillup, and, while he endeavours to account for all the ſlander thrown on him, he ſeeks for precedents, and finds unfortunately for his candour, that his predeceſſors have not only ſuſtained as much abuſe, but he fancies they deſerved more. Thus do the greateſt men become at times unjuſt, and the beſt ungenerous; and thus has DRYDEN given SETTLE cauſe to exult by entering the liſts with him, and thus has LANGBAINE reaſon to reproach him for ſeeking out faults in the writings of SHAKESPEAR and his cotemporaries, which are much more glaring in his own. All this can be eaſier accounted for than defended.

A man born like DRYDEN, with that fullneſs of genius, that elevation of ſoul, that grandeur of idea, that ſtrength of imagination, which ſo rarely meet in one mind, muſt naturally deſire to appropriate ſuch rare and admirable qualities according to their own meritorious bent, for it may be ſet down as an invariable maxim that perfection loves to attach itſelf to perfection, and that eminent abilities are naturally allied to goodneſs of heart.

But it is ſometimes the misfortune of a poet to be poor, and God knows, to the diſgrace of human nature, poverty is too often indiſcriminately confounded with infamy. Poetry is allied to philoſophy, and therefore a ſolitary ſtudy. Poets cannot condeſcend to become men of the world; the tinſel and the vanity of human purſuits are void of charms to thoſe who have no mind for folly, no taſte but for truth. Thus men of genius, owing to the world's unmerited contempt for them, and their honeſt pity for the world, tread a lonely path through life, envy their enemy, and conſcious integrity alone their friend.

Where then do they ſeek for the conſolation they ſo greatly deſerve? Naturally in an intercourſe with that ſex among which, ſhould they make a fortunate choice, they find elyſium in that very world whoſe ſtudy is to provide them a hell. As nothing then can equal the exquiſite felicity taſted by minds ſo delicately capable of meritorious enjoyment, the poet would be literally poſſeſſed of all thoſe pleaſures his pen tranſcribes from his fancy, were it not chequered by that bittereſt of anxiety, her diſtreſs he loves. To ſee his wife and her offspring looking up to him for that aſſiſtance it is not in his power to afford attacks his reaſon, and converts his ſenſibility to madneſs. Imagination is racked to procure relief.

He toils, he ſucceeds: he reads to his approving partner thoſe noble efforts of the ſoul with which his love for her inſpired him. He haſtens to receive the reward of his labours; and, at length, after repeated humiliations, the worthy effuſions of human genius are ſold for a ſcanty ſum, to procure a fortune for the heir of ſome penurious bookſeller.

Is it then wonderful that men whoſe trembling ſenſations are their eſſence, who are all ſoul, all quickneſs, all ſuſceptibility—ſo irritated, ſo humiliated, ſo lowered—ſhould at length grow careleſs of their fame, and give the world a handle for their cenſure? Thus it happened with DRYDEN, who finding himſelf in a licentious age, and, what was worſe, in unpitied neceſſity, he certainly too illiberally conformed to the ruling paſſion of the times, which apoſtacy, in one of his dedications, he beautifully abjures, and loads his enemies with merited confuſion.

The hiſtory of DRYDEN's political apoſtacy is by no means inexcuſeable. It had none of the features of WALLER's treachery; for, though the firſt eſſay of his genius made its way to the world through a panegyric on the Lord Protector, which was followed up with a congratulation on the return

of CHARLES the ſecond, he did not facilitate the fate of CHARLES the firſt, nor flatter his murderer. He took public affairs in the ſtate he found them, and in what he did he followed a whole nation.

When JAMES the ſecond came to the throne, who, in ſtruggling to eſtabliſh popery, loſt his kingdom, it was natural to wiſh that ſome men of conſideration might be prevailed on to countenance his darling meaſure. Sir KENELM DIGBY, a man greatly looked up to, Doctor REYNOLDS and his brother, who had been famous diſputants on this ſubject, and CHILLINGWORTH, whoſe opinions were highly eſteemed, went over to the Church of Rome, and too eaſily perſuaded DRYDEN to accompany them.

This is the leſs difficult to be accounted for, becauſe thoſe who were of any religion under CHARLES the ſecond inclined to popery, for he himſelf died a Roman Catholic; ſo that this eaſy tranſition was no more than to acknowledge publicly, what before had been admitted privately. DRYDEN ſeems to have had too much ſimplicity to ſee how far he was to be made an inſtrument of in favour of

this new doctrine; and, till by the perſuaſion of the prieſts, he had got into a controverſy with STILLINGFLEET, he appears to have had no apprehenſion of the probable injury it might do him privately, by giving his enemies a handle for their calumny; but, having maintained his opinion, there was no receding; and thus he went on, writing poems, and tranſlating hiſtories, till at laſt upon real ground he got BURNEY for an enemy, who was confeſſedly his ſuperior in theological diſpute.

Theſe controverſies ſo occupied him during the reign of JAMES the ſecond, a period only of four years, that he had leiſure to produce but one dramatic piece. This ſhort time he had employed more to his worldly advantage than any ſimilar period of his life. JAMES, though he did not underſtand poetry, underſtood that DRYDEN ſerved him very well as a good advocate, and thus time rolled on, the laureat flattering, and the monarch encouraging; till, having celebrated the birth of a new prince, and written a poem full of predictions, which ſhew he was more a poet than a prophet, the nation waked from its deluſion, and all the golden dreams of our projector vaniſhed into air.

From this moment may be dated the adverſe for-

tune of DRYDEN. The revolution accompliſhed, a papiſt could no longer fill the ſituation of poet laureat; he was deprived of this honour, and what was worſe, his inveterate enemy, SHADWELL, ſucceeded him. In this ſituation, then, will we leave the hiſtory of DRYDEN, to examine up to this period, his dramatic works, how far his other productions may be touched upon, and to ſpeak ſhortly of thoſe controverſies which aroſe out of his ſucceſs or diſappointment.

The *Wild Gallant*, a comedy, produced in 1663, gave no great promiſe of very ſtriking reputation. The critics very ſucceſsfully attacked it, and unfortunately, having withdrawn it for the purpoſe of making alterations, inſtead of wiſely ſubmitting to the deciſion of the public, it was re-produced in ſuch a ſtate that it received, according to the pugiliſts, a riſing blow, that had very nearly been fatal to the author's dramatic fame. LANGRAINE, who is very angry with him, certainly with reaſon, for his abuſe of his predeceſſors, ſays the plot of this play is not original, but he does him the juſtice at the ſame time to admit, that he has ſo beautified it, that he will allow him to be called the author of the *Wild Gallant*.

The *Rival Ladies*, 1664. This is a tragi-comedy;

it is written in verſe, and cunningly enough dedicated to Lord ORRERY, who was a lover and a writer of poetry, and particularly of tragedies in rhime. There were many reaſons why DRYDEN choſe to write in verſe. It was his beſt forte; it was a novelty; though in his preface he endeavours to prove that *Gorbuduc* was written in the ſame manner, which aſſertion LANGRAINE has completely refuted; but the ſtrongeſt reaſon, which indeed expoſes DRYDEN to the accuſation of being ſubſervient, was that the ear of CHARLES had been accuſtomed to the jingle of French rhime. The ſucceſs of the piece did not warrant the experiment. It was thought novel, but it was conſidered as an innovation.

Before DRYDEN entered on a third play, he ſhielded himſelf under the alliance of Sir ROBERT HOWARD, whoſe works we have curſorily examined. They produced between them the *Indian Queen*, in 1665. It met with ſome ſucceſs, but DRYDEN's enemies gave all the merit to HOWARD, which was invidious enough, for we are ignorant at this moment what part of it he wrote. Perhaps from this grew the coolneſs, and afterwards the quarrel between theſe two authors.

The *Indian Emperor* followed the *Indian Queen* in every ſenſe, for it was a ſequel to it; a ſpecies of dramatic entertainment that never did, nor ever will ſucceed greatly. A fear of this is ſuppoſed to have induced DRYDEN to have the ſtory printed and circulated among the audience, and this is the circumſtance ridiculed in the *Rehearſal*, where BAYES ſays that he ſhall take particular care "to inſinuate the plot into the boxes."

Secret Love, or, The *Maiden Queen*, was performed in 1668, by which time DRYDEN was made poet laureat. It is clear that he had not yet a fixed opinion of his own dramatic merit, for in the preface to this play, though he cannot give up that an author has a right to decide, and is competent to do ſo on the conſtructive value of his piece, yet he thinks he may be led away by a fond predilection of the more fanciful part, ſo as to be completely deceived in any eventful judgment he may form of its ſucceſs; which means nothing more than that an author may fail through the caprice of the public, and which indeed WALLER had ſaid, or rather inſinuated before, in his prologue to the *Maid's Tragedy*,

'Tis left to you; the boxes and the pit
Are ſovereign judges of this ſort of wit.

In other things the knowing artiſt may
Judge better than the people; but a play,
Made for delight and for no other uſe,
If you approve it not, has no excuſe.

Sir Martin Marall, 1668, is a mixture from a variety of things; many paſſages are taken from QUINAULT'S *L'Amant Indiſcret*, and *L'Etourdi* of MOLIERE: *Marmion* has alſo been looked into, and the ſong belongs to VOITURE; but the heavieſt charge made againſt DRYDEN was, that it was a play given to him by the Duke of NEWCASTLE, which he wrote when he was in France, and this is confirmed by the books of the Stationers' Company, in which there is a play entered in that nobleman's name, under the ſame title.

The *Tempeſt*, 1670, is an alteration, and intended as an amendment of SHAKESPEAR'S celebrated play under that title. There are ſome very artful and ingenious things in this piece, and indeed DRYDEN could not have taxed his genius higher, than by venturing to lay any thing of his own by the ſide of our incomparable bard. MIRANDA'S ſiſter, who like her, had never ſeen a man, and the youth who had never ſeen a woman, make up but the ſame incident differently treated, therefore it is not any

thing created, but an extenſion of the ſame ſtring, which SHAKESPEAR had before drawn as tight as it would bear, and even the ſhe monſter had been anticipated by her brother; all which are clear proofs that the great and natural requiſities for the ſtage were not completely known to DRYDEN, but this he did not care for; ſhew and ſpectacle had become the faſhion, and where could ſuch a vehicle be found to aſſiſt it as SHAKESPEAR'S *Tempeſt*.

DAVENANT, who it is ſaid had a hand in this piece, was now dead. The taſte he had introduced his ſucceſſors were obliged to keep up; and DRYDEN, who has frequently, but falſely confeſſed he had no talent for the ſtage, gave, however wiſely or not, into this taſte, and in his preface he defends his having pillaged SHAKESPEAR, by the lame excuſe, by the bye, that FLETCHER and Sir JOHN SUCKLING had done ſo before him. The genius of our immortal poet proved however to be equal to this or any ordeal, for poſterity, that infallible critic, while its production, with all its tinſel attractions, is neglected and forgotten, has in its judgment thought proper to reſtore SHAKESPEARE to himſelf.

Whether or not it was conſidered that DRYDEN upon a compariſon with SHAKESPEAR, had fallen

into diſrepute, this appeared to be a favourable moment for his enemies to exult. The famons ELKIMAH SETTLE, whom DRYDEN in his folly handed down, or rather kicked into the notice of poſterity, inſtantly brought out a tragedy in rhime, called The *Empreſs of Morocco*, which by means of hired applauſe, exactly the farce which was acted over again in France between RACINE and PRADON, grew into ſuch favour that it was performed by the court ladies at Whitehall.

SETTLE, finding that this firſt blow told ſo well, publiſhed his play with engravings, and a bold preface, in which he bid his adverſary defiance. DRYDEN, who all his life ſeems to have known every thing better than prudence, grew exaſperated, and poured out ſuch a torrent of thoughtleſs ſtrictures againſt SETTLE and his play, as inſtantly made the matter perſonal*.

* It is hardly to be credited that a man of DRYDEN's conſequence and abilities could condeſcend to write in this manner. "He is," ſays he, ſpeaking of SETTLE, "a man of moſt deplorable underſtanding, without converſation. His being is in a twilight of ſenſe and ſome glimmering of thought, which can never faſhion into wit or Engliſh. His ſtyle is boiſterous and rough-hewn; his rhime incorrigibly lewd, and his numbers perpetually harſh and ill-ſounding. The little talent which he has is fancy. He ſometimes la-

DRYDEN got on from bad to worſe. His next play was called *An Evening Love, or the Mock Aſtrologer.* It came out in 1671, and was dedicated to the duke of NEWCASTLE, who, as we have ſeen, wrote many plays and other things, of which, a circumſtance among thoſe human contingences we have to lament, nothing is generally known but his *Treatiſe on Horſemanſhip.* In this dedication, which was full of the fulſome flattery that DRYDEN deſpiſed and practiſed, is manifeſted a perturbed and diſſatisfied mind. It had not cooled from the iraſcibility into which he had plunged it in his attack on SETTLE. He therefore deplores the treatment he receives, ſays that he

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"bours with a thought? but, with the pudder to bring it into the "world, 'tis commonly ſtill born." In another place he ſays, "He has a heavy hand at fools, and a great felicity in writing non-"ſenſe for them. Fools they will be in ſpight of him. His king, "his two empreſſes, his villain, and his ſub-villain, nay his hero, "have all a certain caſt of the father; their folly was born and bred "in them, and ſomething of Elkinah will be viſible." He next goes into an examination of the play, in which there is nonſenſe enough God knows, but it was pitiful that DRYDEN ſhould have no other employ than to detect it. He examines, expoſes, diſcovers, ridicules, imitates, and does every thing his invention can ſupply to expoſe his rival, till at length he ſays, "And now having daubed "him with his own puddle, we are come from abroad his dancing, "maſking, rebounding, breathing, fleet," epithets fairly deduced from SETTLE, "and as if we had landed at Gotham we meet no-"thing but fools and nonſenſe."

has been guilty of no more faults than others; that if he has been a plagiariſt ſo has every body elſe, that SHAKESPEAR's plays are all to be found in the hundred novels of CINTHIO, which is a literal falſity by the bye, and that he is the very JANUS of poets; that FLETCHER, whoſe plays are from Spaniſh ſtories, knew nothing of plotting, and that his luxuriance was worſe than the careleſsneſs of SHAKESPEAR; that JONSON borrowed of the ancients, and that his excellence lay in characters of low vice and folly*.

* It is ſo pitiable to think that DRYDEN, in this and other parts of his writings, ſhould ſtoop to the deſpicable practice of reviling others for no motive upon earth but becauſe he confeſſes himſelf vulnerable, which he ought not to have been had he felt firmly, that I ſhall with a few obſervations cloſe this head, and get rid for the preſent of ſuch an unpleaſant topic. He ſays in one place, "but, "malice and partiality ſet apart, let any man who underſtands "Engliſh, read diligently the works of SHAKESPEAR and FLETCHER, "and I dare undertake that he will find ſome ſolecifm in ſpeech, or "ſome notorious flaw in ſenſe and language. I dare almoſt chal-"lenge any man to ſhew me a page together which is correct in both." Partiality ſeems to have been here ſet apart, but malice was certainly not forgot. In another place he ſays, "I have always acknowledged "the wit of our predeceſſors with all the veneration that becomes "me; but I am ſure their wit was not that of gentlemen, there "was ever ſomething that was ill bred and clowniſh in it, and "which confeſſed the converſation of the authors." Then by way of the bathos in argument, he ſays, "They did not write for the age in "which they lived, they wrote to be celebrated after their deceace." As to their audiences, he ſays, "they knew no better, and there

What are we to underſtand by all this, and what is it to the world, ſuppoſing it to be truth? neither more nor leſs than that if he had been an offender, ſo had they; like the man who ſaid he did not mind being hanged ſo he could be hanged in company. The play itſelf needed defence upon this ſcore, for the main plot of it is borrowed from T. CORNEILLE, who as we have ſeen borrowed it from CALDERON. The reſt is taken from MOLIERE, QUINAULT, and SHAKESPEAR; ſo it was no wonder he ſhould conceive there was a neceſſity to cry rogue firſt.

Tyrannic Love, or The *Virgin Martyr*, 1672, is a mixture of merit and defect. DRYDEN informs us that this play was written in ſeven weeks, which is an inſult rather than a conciliation. If it was imperfect on that account, why was not more time taken to perfect it? If it was perfect why have the

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" fore were ſatisfied with what they brought. Thoſe who call " theirs the golden age of poetry, have only this reaſon for it, that " they were content with acorns before they knew the uſe of bread." How muſt DRYDEN reproach himſelf, were he alive, with having written this unwarrantable malignity, to ſee how many of SHAKESPEAR'S plays are at this moment the darlings of the public, how few of his own. He would find that there is ſo much bread to be extracted from them as not only to ſupport managers and actors, but commentators, painters, engravers, vampers, publiſhers, and republiſhers, out of all number or calculation.

vanity to hold it up as a prodigy? The rants of MAXIMIN have been the perpetual theme of ridicule, and were by the author's own confeſſion his ſhame. There is neverthelefs ſome very fine writing in this play.

In his next two plays, DRYDEN ſeems determined to indulge his genius to the very ſtretch of enthuſiaſm; as this was a fanciful age, and the effort would ſo far juſtify the attempt that what he loſt on the ſide of probability he would gain on the ſide of poetry, the ſucceſs was equal to his hopes. Not forgetting, however the aſſiſtance his former abuſe of his predeceſſors had lent him, he diſcredits them as much as poſſible in the epilogue, and again defends this meaſure in a preface, in which he threatens fully to expoſe them. He kept his word only in parcels, in which he has indeed expoſed their faults, together with his own want of candour; but, as it would have given him pain to have enumerated their beauties he has only endeavoured to damn them, as POPE calls it, with faint praiſe.

This was the moment for the vultures of the theatre, as Doctor JOHNSON calls them, to attack DRYDEN, for certainly theſe plays were written in defiance of probability. MARTIN CLIFFORD, to

whom SPRAT addreſſed the Life of COWLEY, began. He ſaid that *Almanzor* was no more copied from *Achilles* than from *Ancient Piſtol*; that he had ſeen him in many diſguiſes, and under other names. That this huffcap was once the Indian emperor, and at another time MAXIMIN. "You are, there-"fore," ſays he, "a ſtrange unconſcionable thief; "thou art not content to ſteal from others, but doſt "rob thy poor wretched ſelf too."

CLIFFORD in this buſineſs was SETTLE's harbinger, who had only lain by to muſter materials, and get a fair opportunity to attack DRYDEN with effect. It muſt be confeſſed he managed his defence, if not with ſo much genius, yet with more decency, candour, and good ſenſe; for where he takes ſhame to himſelf it is done with a conſcious deference, and before he expoſes any exceptionable paſſage of his antagoniſt he acknowledges his talents and laments that he is compelled to do himſelf juſtice; all which conveyed in keen and ſolemn irony was ſure to tell, becauſe no man pleads his cauſe well who has loſt his temper *.

* DRYDEN having ridiculed SETTLE's deſcription of the ſhips in the Empreſs of Morroco, SETTLE retorts upon him by an examination of his Annus Mirabilis and his Indian emperor, and it muſt be confeſſed ſucceſsfully. DRYDEN, in the firſt, deſcribing a ſhip called the

Marriage ala Mode, 1673, has been attacked as a plagiary by LANGBAINE with his uſual inveteracy againſt DRYDEN, who points out four authors from whom this play was ſtolen; but this, ſays he, is uſual with our poet. DRYDEN tired with ſoliciting friends,

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London, unfortunately ſtyles her a Phœnix, in the firſt ſtanza, and a Sea Waſp in the laſt. "Our author," ſays SETTLE, "at his writing "of this was not in his altitude to compare ſhips to floating palaces; "a compariſon to the purpoſe was a perfection he did not arrive to "'till the Indian emperor's days. But perhaps this ſimilitude has "much more in it than we imagine; this ſhip had a great many guns "in her, and theſe put altogether, made the ſting in the waſp's tail: "for this is all the reaſon I can gueſs why it "ſeemed a waſp." But "becauſe we will allow him all we can to help him out, let it be a "phœnix, ſea waſp, and the rarity of ſuch an animal may do much "towards heightening the fancy." SETTLE obſerves upon other paſſages with the ſame good effect; I ſhall give only one inſtance.

> The people like a headlong torrent go,
> And every dam they break or overthrow:
> But, unoppoſed, they either loſe their force,
> Or wind in volumes to their former courſe.

"A very pretty alluſion," ſays SETTLE "contrary to all ſenſe or "reaſon. Torrents, as I take it, let them wind never ſo much, can "never return to their former courſe, unleſs we can ſuppoſe that "fountains can go upwards, which is impoſſible. Nay more, in the "foregoing page he tells us ſo too. A trick of a very unfaithful "memory.

> "But can no more than fountains upwards flow."

By theſe and other remarks, SETTLE ſtood up, and was encouraged as the competitor of DRYDEN.

began in this play to deprecate foes, for he dedicated it to the libertine ROCHESTER, the very infamous WILMOT, who was well known to have been his inſidious enemy.

The *Aſſignation, or Love in a Nunnery*, 1673, was damned, againſt the opinion, as the author ſays, of the beſt judges. DRYDEN had caſt ſome reflections on a play of RAVENSCROFT who took this opportunity, as DRYDEN ſays of SETTLE, of "dirtying him with his own puddle." This was one in a prologue in which he ironically blames the public for letting ſo many plagiaries paſs with applauſe, and, damning this which was perfectly original. This brought LANGBAINE upon RAVENSCROFT, who preſently ſhewed that DRYDEN had pillaged no leſs than eight authors for thoſe materials which he worked into The *Aſſignation*. This play is dedicated to ſir CHARLES SEDLEY, in a ſtyle of great elegance, which is, however, leſſened in its value by his uſual want of firmneſs in deploring his hard treatment from the public.

Amboyna, 1673, as its title evidently ſhews, was written to ſerve a popular purpoſe by painting a picture of the cruelty of the Dutch to enflame the minds of the people againſt that nation.

It is, like moſt temporary things, weak, although he declares in his epilogue he hopes to make his poetry as deſtructive as that by which TYRTÆUS of old animated the Spartans.

State of Innocence and Fall of Man. This piece of courſe was never performed. It is exactly a morality, and, with MILTON before him, it was impoſſible but DRYDEN muſt produce ſomething full of beauty; but it was written haſtily and thoughtleſsly, and has ſuch reprehenſible paſſages in it that its author thought fit to appologize for the liberties he had taken with poetic rules. His dedication of this production to the Ducheſs of YORK, ought to have inſpired her with an ineffable contempt of the author. Dr. JOHNSON calls it "an attempt to "mingle earth and heaven by praiſing human ex-"cellence in the language of religion*.

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*The following extract from the dedication will fairly bear the doctor out. LANGBAINE calls it a note beyond *Ela*. "Your perſon "is ſo admirable that it can ſcarce receive addition when it ſhall be "glorified: and your ſoul which ſhines through it, finds it of a "ſubſtance ſo near her own, that ſhe will be pleaſed to paſs an age "within it and to be confined to ſuch a palace." It is curious enough that DRYDEN ſhould make a kind of apology for printing this work. Why ſhould it not be printed as well as the *Hind and the Panther*, or any other of his writings! But a falſe delicacy or ſome other motiv prevailed, and falacy muſt be called in to excuſe vanity. He ſays that many hundred copies were diſperſed abroad without his know-

Aurenzebe, 1676. This tragedy is written in rhyme, and appears to have had great pains taken with it; parts of it are deſervedly celebrated, but whatever are its beauties, its being conveyed through this vehicle is an unſurmountable objection to its keeping a place on the theatre, where otherwiſe it might perhaps have been deſervedly a favourite.

All for Love, 1678. This is the only play, if we may believe the author, that he wrote for himſelf. It is a pity, however, his favorite play is not original, for all the beauty is derived at leaſt from SHAKESPEAR, and this circumſtance has obliged the world to acknowledge that it is very nearly a complete tragedy. To ſhew, however, with what caution genius ought to be ſuppreſſed and curtailed, in furbiſhing up this play from SHAKESPEAR, the poliſh has diſplaced many of the beauties, and

ledge or conſent, and that theſe, gathering new faith, it became at length a libel againſt him, and, therefore, he was obliged to publiſh it in his own defence. Who would have taken the pains to copy a work of ſuch length much leſs to multiply copies to the tune of many hundreds? What a diſgrace to genius are theſe weakneſſes. Thus, to ſhew that he was an adept in all the diſtinctions of fiction, he pratically defines groſs hyperbole to be the ſtyle of a dedication, and ſubtle duplicity the language of a preface.

whatever it has gained in harmony and regularity it has loſt in fire and nature. DRYDEN in this tragedy has profeſſed to have imitated SHAKESPEAR, but he has done more, he has actually quoted him, not only out of this play but out of others; but every body knows the diſtinction; the merit of both are admirable, yet one truth is invincible. DRYDEN could never have ſhewn ſo much ſkill as a lapidary if SHAKESPEAR had not furniſhed the diamond.

Oedipus, 1679. Of this tragedy DRYDEN planned the whole, but only wrote the firſt and third acts; the reſt was written by LEE. The ſubject has been often treated, but never before ſo ably. There are, however, ſome ſhocking and diſguſting circumſtances in it, and at beſt it muſt be conſidered as a great rather than a pleaſing tragedy. The mind naturally prepares itſelf for affecting and even terrible circumſtances, but without ſomething to intereſt the milder feelings, that terror becomes offenſive and revolting, which by being ſoftened into pity would have been awful and exemplary.

Troilus and Creſſida, 1679. This play which is confeſſedly an alteration from SHAKESPEAR, is nevertheleſs in many reſpects an improvement. The ſubject however is indecent and unbecoming, and

therefore can never command a reſpectable ſtand on the ſtage, though it might have pleaſed in the licentious age in which DRYDEN brought it forward. Every reader of taſte and diſcernment rejoices that SHAKESPEAR wrote this play, becauſe the characters of the Grecian chiefs are drawn ſo as to be put upon a fair competition even with thoſe of HOMER; but the drift of the play, let it be retouched how it may, will never worthily affect a rational mind.

The *Kind Keeper* has more comic merit than DRYDEN thinks proper to allow himſelf, for he ſays his genius did not incline him to the ſtage, and that in particular comedy was not his talent. This play came out in 1680, and was written to expoſe, as LANGBAINE ſays, the keeping part of the town, but, to be true, this picture was obliged to be ſo indecent, that thoſe who were ridiculed in it in a maſs, for there does not appear to have been any perſonality, took the advantage of this excuſe and fairly damned it, Says an author,

> They damned the play all at one fatal blow,
> To break the glaſs that did their pictures ſhew.

Nay, ſo far did their averſion to hear indecency, who were accuſtomed to practiſe it, prevail, that when DRYDEN publiſhed it, he was obliged to expunge all the exceptionable paſſages.

The *Spaniſh Friar*, 1681, has one peculiar merit for which its author has been allowed infinite credit; I mean the union of the two plots, which are ſo well knit and ſo equally material to the intereſt of the piece, that it is difficult to ſay which is ſubordinate. This may be a ſtriking merit in a tragi-comedy, but this very circumſtance revolts againſt general dramatical or even poetical conſtruction, which demands not two plots but a plot and an epiſode. Dryden, however, ſince he choſe to write a play in itſelf heterogeneous, choſe alſo to give it the ſort of ſtrength moſt likely to aſſiſt its intereſt.

Dryden has been accuſed of attacking the clergy in his play becauſe he was refuſed a degree at college, a circumſtance however that nobody has been able to ſubſtantiate. There can be no doubt but the ſatire is laudable, for it is general. If there be no ſuch character as *Dominick*, let it be conſidered as a monſter in nature with all my heart; but, as experience has frequently proved that ſuch agents of infamy have too often deſtroyed the peace of families, and ſhrouded their hypocriſy under the veil of ſanctity, nothing can be ſo meritorious as ſuch an expoſition; in which caſe let every one who complains be conſidered as an abetter of

this moſt pernicious of all crimes; but as this play is well known and as deſervedly a favorite as any thing can be, made up of incongruous materials, this teſt will ſufficiently ſhew that the drift was meritorious.

The *Duke of Guiſe*, 1683, written by DRYDEN in conjunction with LEE, was conſidered as a piece levelled at the enemies of the court, for which DRYDEN was ſeverely attacked; but he parried the thruſt by throwing all the odium on LEE; for, ſays he, "availing himſelf of a promiſe I had made to "write a play with him, he happened to claim it "juſt upon the finiſhing of a poem, when I would "have been glad of a little reſpite." Thus he not only loads LEE with all the reproach due to what that author had written, but he tacitly blames him for hurrying him into what he had written himſelf, which was, as he tells us, at leaſt two-thirds of the play.

Albion and Albianus, 1685, a maſque, was the only dramatic piece written by DRYDEN during the reign of JAMES the ſecond. It was like every thing elſe of this author at that time, produced on purpoſe to annoy the republicans; and was particularly aimed at the fanciful doctrines of Lord SHAFTS-

BURY and his adherents. This maſque was got up at a very great expence, but excited ſo little curioſity that it would have been very unprofitable to the theatre had it taken any run; but, to ſettle the matter at once, on the ſecond night of its repreſentation, an alarm being given that the duke of MONMOUTH had landed in the weſt, the various intereſts excited for the fate of that gallant but unadviſed nobleman abſorbed every other conſideration, and *Albion and Albianus* was never reſumed*.

We have now gone over all the dramatic works of DRYDEN before the revolution. I ſhall next examine thoſe of his cotemporaries up to that period, taking in ſuch popular circumſtances as ſerved to make them remarkable.

* Doctor JOHNSON places this event at the performance of *King Arthur*, which did not make its appearance, as we ſhall ſee, till after the Revolution, and, ſix years after the Duke of MONMOUTH was beheaded.

CHAP IX.

WYCHERLY, SHADWELL, SEDLEY, LEE, SETTLE, DURFEY, AND CROWNE.

I SHALL have next to ſpeak of WYCHERLY; but I ſhall not examine the particulars of his becoming a Roman Catholic in FRANCE, his turning Proteſtant on his arrival in ENGLAND, his being a favourite of VILLIERS, Duke of Buckingham, and of CHARLES the ſecond, who paid him a viſit in his lodging in Bow Street, where he was ſick, and adviſed him to go to the South of FRANCE, allowing him five hundred pounds to defray his expences, the king's chuſing him governor to his ſon, probably the Duke of MONMOUTH, and allowing him fifteen hundred a year as a penſion for undertaking that trouble; his loſing all this favour and protection by marrying the Counteſs of DROGHEDA; his reſentment of the king's coolneſs; his lady's jealouſy, the violence of which ſo conquered her health that ſhe left him a widower; his diſputes concerning her fortune by the

means of which he was thrown into priſon, and afterwards releaſed by JAMES the ſecond, who, having ſeen the *Plain Dealer,* paid his debts and gave him two hundred a year, in ſpite of all which, however, he was always in diſtreſs; of theſe and many other particulars, which make up the curious and varied hiſtory of WYCHERLY, I muſt content myſelf with this ſummary account and paſs on to his plays.

Theſe are *Love in a Wood*, performed in 1672, which is ſo poor a ſpecimen of that wit afterwards ſo conſpicious in WYCHERLY, that it can ſcarcely have been ſuppoſed the production of that author. The *Gentleman Dancing Maſter*, 1673, has a ſlight claim to praiſe. The *Country Wife*, ſo frequently altered, and now well known on the ſtage, is, however, a play of a different deſcription. The characters are well drawn, and convey a ſtrong portion of wit and gaiety, and at the ſame time diſplay a great deal of nature and truth. The *Plain Dealer*, however, is the beſt of WYCHERLY'S productions by a conſiderable difference. It was DRYDEN'S opinion that this piece contained a ſpecies of the boldeſt and moſt uſeful ſatire that the Engliſh ſtage had ever boaſted. It is certainly full of correct nature, ſtrong, point, and ſhrewd obſerva-

tion; but its plot is, perhaps, one of the happieſt that ever was invented. An amiable man, who has eſtranged his heart from a friend and a miſtreſs who love and value him, for a man and a woman who deceive and betray him, who is ſo infatuated with his abſurd partiality that he is made to be unjuſt and ungenerous, with an honourable and noble heart, and who at length corrects his folly, and ſecures to himſelf happineſs for life by the detection of his falſe friends, and a conviction of their truth who had been faithful to him, is a moſt admirable ground work indeed. Nor is the juſtice thrown into the epiſode leſs dramatic, or leſs meritorious, and what keeps it in place is, that, though it is intereſting and uſeful in the piece, it is ſtill epiſode. The miſanthrope and other things ſeem to have been in WYCHERLY's mind when he traced his characters; but when ſubjects are ſo well handled it is but mean cavilling to ſay much about it; and, in revenge, if he had recourſe to French writers, Engliſh writers have had recourſe to him, and to ſuch effect as to make the world believe thoſe pictures original which they have only traced upon his canvas.

SHADWELL, whoſe father loſt a competent fortune by his adherence to CHARLES the firſt, having

been well educated, was thrown upon the world, like many others at the Reſtoration, and obliged to live by his wits and wrote ſeveral plays which were well received.

In this reign of plots and parties, as it was impoſſible to be conſidered as a public character without eſpouſing ſome particular cauſe or opinion, ſo out of this came opportunity for all that ſeverity which DRYDEN ſo profuſely dealt on the head of SHADWELL; who, being a profeſſed Whig, and his antagoniſt a profeſſed Tory, furniſhed himſelf the materials by which his public character might be attacked, which, probably DRYDEN would not have uſed had not his ſucceſs as a dramatic writer, though clearly an inferior one, rouſed that irritability in his nature, which upon ſuch occaſions he could not reſtrain. This, however, manifeſted itſelf only by indirect indications till the appearance of The *Duke of Guiſe*, when, it being plainly proved that SHADWELL had a hand in the pamphlet that was written againſt it, DRYDEN vindicated himſelf and a ſtorm was raiſed that SHADWELL with great difficulty weathered, and which obliged one HUNT, who had aſſiſted, to take ſhelter in HOLLAND.

DRYDEN, having now a proper opportunity,

determined to cruſh SHADWELL at once; to do which he wrote his celebrated poem of *Mac Flecknoe**, which POPE confeſſes to have been the

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* It is impoſſible to paſs over here a very extraordinary error that every writer that I can find, except LANGBAINE, has run into, as to the time of DRYDEN's writing this poem, and his motive for it. Over and over again are we told that it aroſe entirely from the mortification he felt when SHADWELL ſucceeded him as laureat, through the intereſt of lord DORSET, who has been ſaid by the way which is not very likely having been the patron of SHADWELL, to have remunerated DRYDEN out of his own purſe. As to Dr. JOHNSON, I do not ſee how he ever could have read the poem, for he ſays that DRYDEN "celebrated the intruder's inauguration in a poem, ex-"quiſitely ſatirical, called *Mac Flecknoe*." There is nothing in the poem that induces you to underſtand this, but you are obliged to believe the very reverſe. Firſt of all, was FLECNOE ever laureat? and, if he was not, how could he reſign the laurel to his ſon SHADWELL? At the time when this diſpute was at its height, for he had left off writing for the ſtage nineteen years, FLECKNOE was on the verge of the grave, and it is very probable that he did not live till the revolution, a point, however, I cannot determine, for no one of his biographers have mentioned the time of his birth, or his death. The poſition of the argument in the poem is that FLECKNOE had long reigned "through all the realms of nonſenſe abſolute;" and, being "worn out with buſineſs," which he muſt have been, having left off nineteen years,

"did at length debate
"To ſettle the ſucceſſion of the ſtate."

What ſtate? The Realms of Nonſenſe. What has this to do with the King's poet laureat? Surely nothing; for, if it had, DRYDEN muſt have been the MAC FLECKNOE of his own poem. This Em-

ground work of The *Dunciad*, to which I ſhall add that, though for the cauſe of poetry it is well that theſe poems were written, for the cauſe of candour,

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peror of Nonſenſe, like ALEXANDER, nominates for a ſucceſſor the moſt worthy, for ſays he

Nature pleads, that he
Should only rule who moſt reſembles me.
SHADWELL alone my perfect image bears,
Mature in dullneſs from his tender years;
SHADWELL alone, of all my ſons, is he
Who ſtands confirmed in full ſtupidity:
The reſt to ſome faint meaning make pretence,
But SHADWELL never deviates into ſenſe.

He next enumerates the collateral pretenſions of SHADWELL; hints at *Epſom Wells*, the *Virtuoſo*, and other things in which he ſtole from ETHERIDGE, or was helped out by SEDLEY; but no mention is made of any thing ſo late as the duke of GUISE, and, having conducted him to the palace of Dulneſs, ſituate on the ruins of ALLEYN's Theatre, then become a brothel, he inveſts him with the neceſſary inſignia and diſappears through a trap. What reſemblance even in the remoteſt degree has this to the inauguration of a poet laureat? but, to clench this nail, which perhaps is faſt enough already, LANGBAINE, one reaſon of whoſe enmity to DRYDEN was his firm friendſhip for SHADWELL, and who muſt have known, becauſe he knew both the men, when and why this poem was written, has in his life of SHADWELL, theſe words: "Mr. DRYDEN I dare preſume little "imagined, when he wrote that ſatire of *Mac Flecknoe*, that the ſub-"ject he there ſo much expoſes and ridicules ſhould have ever lived "to have ſucceeded him in wearing the bays." Now, as LANGBAINE is Dr JOHNSON's oracle as to every thing dramatic, it is really unlucky he did not happen to light upon this paſſage.

and out of reſpect to the reputations of their authors as men, it had been better they had never been written at all. General invective is eaſily vented and poetry is diſgraced and contaminated when it deſcends to ſcurility and perſonality.

SHADWELL, like BROME, made JONSON his model, and there can be no doubt but many of his plays have conſiderable merit. The *Sullen Lovers*, 1668. This piece is regular and natural. It however wants ſpirit and is little more than an imitation of *Les Facheux* of MOLIERE. The *Royal Shepherdeſs*, though always given to SHADWELL, was, as I have already noticed, written by a Mr. FOUNTAIN, and only fitted to the ſtage by him, as he candidly confeſſes in an epiſtle prefixed to the publication. The *Humouriſts*, 1671, was intended to ridicule the follies of the age, and the reader may diſcern a cloſe imitation of JONSON throughout the piece. It ſhared the fate of DRYDEN's *Kind Keeper*, being damned by thoſe who moſt ſeverely felt the force of its ridicule. The *Miſer*, 1672, is both from PLAUTUS and MOLIERE. SHADWELL has made a very good play of it, but it remained for FIELDING to give it perfection.

Epſom Wells, 1676, is certainly a play of great merit. The author had JONSON's *Bartholomew Fair* in view, to which comedy it has been pre-

ferred, but it cannot, however, be ſaid to have been ſtolen from it. It has been highly ſpoken of, and perpetually pilfered; but ſuch was the foreneſs of thoſe times, that the hits were thought too hard, and therefore thoſe who felt them raiſed a ſucceſsful oppoſition to it. *Pſyche*, 1675. This was a tragedy full of machinery and written in rhime. Indeed the very piece which was parodied by DUFFET. The *Libertine*, 1676. This tragedy is upon the ſame ſubject that has employed ſo many Spaniſh, Italian, and French pens, and which the more naturally it is written the more horror it will beget. SHADWELL has done his beſt, and to ſay truth, thoſe who love terror, without probability or intereſt, may here ſatiate themſelves. The *Virtuoſo*, 1676 is a comedy profeſſedly in imitation of JONSON. It is full of characters, ſtrongly drawn, and incidents well imagined, ſome of which have been frefrequently borrowed ſince and brought out as novelties.

The *Hiſtory of Timon of Athens*, 1678, This is SHAKESPEAR'S play altered, but by no means for the better. The *True Widow*, 1679. This is again a comedy full of general ſatire, ſtrong character, and whimſical incidents, and has been a good deal ſtudied by ſome of our modern playwrights. Its fate was like others of this deſcription; it hit

too hard to be liked. The *Woman Captain*, 1680, is a comedy of the ſame deſcription; it had better ſucceſs. The *Lancaſhire Witches*, 1682. This was a party play, and therefore was ſeverely attacked. Whether DRYDEN was concerned in its oppoſition cannot now be known, for he does not appear to have done any thing overtly, but we are told from this time the mutual enmity of theſe authors was firmly rooted, and that it broke out in the following year we certainly know; after which time SHADWELL wrote nothing for the ſtage till the Revolution. I ſhall, therefore leave him for the preſent to ſpeak of others his cotemporaries.

Sir CHARLES SEDLEY, one of the moſt brilliant wits in the reign of CHARLES the ſecond, and who in point of elegance emulated ETHERIDGE, and the more refined ſet who in the midſt of their profligacy, unlike the king, ROCHESTER, and others, had ſome delicacy in their pleaſures, and were now and then ſurprized with a gleam of ſomething almoſt like honour and honeſty, comes before us, not as he did before the court at Weſtminſter, when he was fined five hundred pounds for a riot*, but merely in quality of a dramatic writer.

* This happened near the death of CHARLES the ſecond; and

SEDLEY's dramatic productions, before the Revolution, were The *Mulberry Garden*, 1668, which is a comedy altered from MOLIERE's *Ecole des Maris*. It had conſiderable ſucceſs. *Antony and Cleopatra*, 1677, is altered from SHAKESPEAR, and has ſome merit, but it ſtood no chance of ſucceſs by the ſide of DRYDEN's *All for Love*. *Bellamira*, or the *Miſtreſs*, taken from the *Eunuch* of TERENCE. It had by no means good ſucceſs; nor indeed, though a moſt brilliant wit in converſation, are any of his plays to be put in competition with thoſe of ETHERIDGE.

LEE, a writer of wonderful powers, whoſe ge-

SEDLEY was ſo ſhocked at the abſurdity of his conduct, which had drawn on him ſo much odium, that he became from that moment an altered man. He applied himſelf to buſineſs, got into parliament, was a celebrated ſpeaker, and ſignalized himſelf againſt the intereſt of JAMES the ſecond, by reſiſting vehemently the propoſition for a ſtanding army after the defeat of the duke of MONMOUTH. He had alſo a domeſtic reaſon for his averſion to the King, which he now manifeſted ſo openly that it was evident nothing could content him but diſpoſſeſſing JAMES of his throne. The king had ſeduced the daughter of Sir CHARLES; and, to make her amends, had created her counteſs of DORCHESTER. This SEDLEY conſidered every way as a moſt glaring inſult, and from that moment determined on revenge. "I hate ingratitude, ſaid he, to a friend," and therefore, as "the king has made my daughter a counteſs, I'll endeavour to make "his daughter a queen," meaning the princeſs MARY, conſort to the prince of ORANGE, afterwards WILLIAM the third.

nius hurried him away with ſuch impetuoſity that he was at laſt deprived of his ſenſes, ſtands nevertheleſs very forward among dramatic authors. His plays before the revolution were nine in number. *Nero*, 1675. This tragedy is a mixed performance, and therefore ill calculated for ſucceſs. It is written partly in proſe, partly in rhime, and partly in blank verſe. *Sophonisba*, 1676. DRYDEN had made rhime ſo faſhionable that LEE as well as others followed his example. *Sophoniſba* is wholly in metre. There is a wonderful tenderneſs in this play, and it had great ſucceſs; but, from the moment DRYDEN rejected rhime, and diſcovered that even blank verſe was ſpeaking more like men of this world, both his and all other tragedies upon this plan were abandoned.

Gloriana, 1676. This piece is full of frenzy, mixed now and then with great beauty. It had no ſucceſs. The *Rival Queens*, 1677. This tragedy is ſo well known that its moſt ſtriking paſſages are every where repeated by heart. It has been a good deal cenſured, unmeritedly, however; unleſs on account of ſome ſpeeches which are full of bombaſt, for its characters and its conſtruction are maſter-pieces. *Alexander*, every where a mixture

of the hero and the madman, is highly conceived and well oppoſed to the honeſty and bluntneſs of *Clytus*. The mild and ſecure *Statira* is admirably contraſted by the vindictive and diſappointed *Roxana*; and this diſcrimination pervades the piece.

As for ſituation, the entry of *Alexander*, his banquet, and his death, being diſpoſed in the firſt, third, and fifth acts, proves LEE not only a good writer, but alſo an adept in the formation of dramatic production. In ſhort, as *Polonius* ſays, "if it be madneſs, there's method in it."

Mithridates, 1678. This tragedy contains many flights of fancy, but it is by no means equal to other things of this author. DRYDEN wrote the epilogue, which is proportionably unequal. *Theodoſius*, 1680, is a tragedy of ſufficient merit to ſtamp the reputation of a writer. It is and ever has been in high favour on the ſtage; ſuch favour as beautiful and exquiſite language, noble and dignified character, and tender and melting diſtreſs demand. The epiſode, however, of *Marican and Pulcheria* is poor and unworthy to make a part of ſuch a play. *Cæſar Borgia*, 1680, is compoſed of that mixture of bombaſt and beauty which appear in all LEE's productions when the frantic fit was on. It had,

however, ſome ſucceſs for a time, but has been long thrown aſide.

Lucius Junius Brutus, 1681. This tragedy is written with great beauty, ſtrength, and dignity. It is remarkably free from that bombaſt which pervades this author, for there is a manlineſs and a noble grandeur runs through the whole of it. It was ſtopt after the third night, as we are informed, by lord ARLINGTON, who was then chamberlain, as an anti monarchical play. *Conſtantine the Great*, 1684. This ſubject, which has been treated by many authors, was not ſo fortunately handled by LEE as the laſt. The play, however, though it has inequalities, is not without merit, but it has not enough to entitle it to permanent ſucceſs. Theſe are all the plays of LEE before the revolution; he was, however, as we have ſeen, concerned in *Oedipus*, and the *Duke of Guiſe*, with DRYDEN.

SETTLE, a man who embraced all principles and all parties, who was a Whig one day and a Tory the next, who cavilled, wrote, and acted in defence of every ſpecies of contradiction, who lived upon the wages of literary proſtitution, who, after bringing out ſeventeen dramatic pieces with various ſucceſs, was reduced to ſuch abject diſtreſs that he attended

a booth at Bartholomew fair, and wrote drolls in which he performed, particularly in one where he perſonated a dragon dreſſed out in painted leather, and who died in a workhouſe—ſuch are worldly fluctuations—This SETTLE was at one time the idol of faſhion and the competitor of DRYDEN; but, to take a curſory view of his plays.

Cambyſes, King of Perſia, 1671. Speaking of this play, LANGBAINE ſays archly that SETTLE was addicted to tragedy. It was a miſerable buſineſs and was but little taken notice of, but The *Empreſs of Morocco*, as we have ſeen, made him amends. *Love and Revenge*, 1675. This play is taken from HEMMING's *Fatal Contract*. It had but little ſucceſs; but SETTLE, by way of keeping up the ball of controverſy after his ſucceſs againſt DRYDEN, attacked SHADWELL, who anſwered him very ſpiritedly. SETTLE did not mind this, for his fixed principle was that a man could not be too notorious. The *Conqueſt of China*, 1676, is ſtolen from Sir ROBERT HOWARD's play on the ſame ſubject. *Ibrahim*, 1677, is taken from SCUDERY, who, as we have ſeen, was a notorious borrower himſelf. In ſhort the reader will recollect he was exactly a kind of French SETTLE.

Paſtor Fido, 1677. The reader, pitying poor

GUARINI, muſt ſicken at a ſubject ſo often and ſo ignorantly treated. *Fatal Love*, 1680, was fatal to its author, for it had no ſucceſs. The *Female Prelate*, 1680. This is nothing leſs than the ſtory of *Pope Joan*, made into a play, a ſubject of all others the moſt impracticable to manage. The *Heir of Morocco*, 1682. Not having had enough of the *Empreſs*, SETTLE here introduced the *Heir*; but, as DRYDEN was otherwiſe employed than to enter the liſts of controverſy with him, this heir died before it had reached maturity. Theſe are all SETTLE's plays before the revolution, moſt of which would have died away after a few nights, had DRYDEN, and others, only reſolved to treat the attacks of their author with the ſilent contempt they deſerved.

DURFEY, who has promulgated more dramatic nonſenſe of his own, and contrived to ſhape into nonſenſe more of the wit of other men, than almoſt any writer or imitator that ever lived, nevertheleſs, by taking no ſide and conducting himſelf inoffenſively, paſſed through life, with a few exceptions *,

* Now and then DURFEY ran on too faſt. Upon one of theſe occaſions he had a benefit to prevent, as ADDISON tells us, his ſinging in a cage for life. The ſtory runs thus, in his own words. "After

pleaſurably to his friends, and profitably to himſelf. He was either, immediately, or collaterally, concerned in thirteen pieces before the revolution.

In the *Siege of Memphis*, 1676, DURFEY was determined to be original as to plot, and an imitator as to ſtyle, both of which circumſtances were unfortunate; for, as he could neither invent nor write verſe, his ſtory is unintereſting, and his writing fuſtian, and the audience gave him to underſtand that they were of this opinion. The *Fond Huſband*, 1676, is a much better play, and was well received. It is a comedy, and in it there is nothing attempted beyond the ſketch of the author's abilities. He was however obliged to thoſe writers he had ſo quick a knack of pilfering for the greateſt part of its ſucceſs. *Madam Fickle*, 1677. In this play this cuckoo, as LANGBAINE calls him "who," ſays he, "loves to ſuck other birds eggs," has here ranſanked neſts in plenty, for there is ſcarcely an incident, or

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"having written more odes than HORACE, and about four times as "many comedies as TERENCE, I find myſelf reduced to great diffi- "culties by the importunities of a ſet of men who of late years have "furniſhed me with the accommodations of life, and will not, as we "ſay, be paid with a ſong."

even a ſpeech, that is not ſtolen from ſomething. The *Fool turned Critic*, 1678. Not contented with ſtealing this play, which was originally RANDOLPH's *Jealous Lovers*, he has even ſtolen the very prologue.

Trick for Trick, 1678. This, which was announced as an original play, was very ſoon diſcovered to be a bad alteration of BEAUMONT and FLETCHER's *Monſieur Thomas*. *Squire Old Sap*, 1679. This play is borrowed from ſo many things, and ſo full of intricacy, that nothing can be ſo difficult as to diſcover the drift of the author. The public therefore did not thank Mr. DURFEY for producing what nobody could underſtand. The *Virtuous Wife*, a comedy, 1680. Here, not contenwith ſtealing from others, he has gone back and gleaned from MARSTON's *Fawn*, where he had reaped a pretty harveſt before; and to make all ſure, he traverſed DRYDEN's *Marriage Ala Mode*, and a few other things that lay in the way. *Sir Barnaby Whig*, 1681. For this play he is obliged to St. EVREMOND and MARMION.

The *Royaliſt*, ſelected like the reſt, but with better judgment. The *Injured Princeſs*, 1682. This

is a tragi-comedy. It is ſtolen from SHAKESPEAR's *Cymbeline*, and moſt wretchedly managed; but, as if this were not enough for DURFEY, he has palmed the old prologue to his own play called The *Fool turned Critic*, for a new one. "So, that," ſays LANGBAINE, "what CLIFFORD applies to DRY-"DEN of ſtealing from himſelf more juſtly belongs to "DURFEY." The *Commonwealth of Women*, a tragi-comedy. This is nothing more than FLETCHER's *Sea Voyage*, badly altered, "the alterations," ſays LANGBAINE, "may be diſcerned from the original "like patches on a coat." The *Banditti*, which is taken from SHIRLEY's *Siſters* and other things, was damned, upon which DURFEY dedicated it to the perſon who was foremoſt in the riot by the name of Sir CRITIC CATCALL, determined, Swiſs like, to get money on one ſide or the other. With the *Fool's Preferment* we take leave of DURFEY for the preſent, on which play I ſufficiently deſcanted when I examined FLETCHER's *Noble Gentleman* from which it is ſtolen.

CROWNE, who was brought forward by ROCHESTER becauſe he envied DRYDEN, and who was afterwards deſerted by that diſhonourable and profligate nobleman, when contrary to his morals

and mind he found himſelf in the predicament of protecting merit *, wrote eighteen plays, twelve of which appeared before the revolution. *Juliana*, a tragi comedy, 1671. This can only be called a piece of promiſe, for it was a firſt attempt; but is nevertheleſs not deſtitute of merit. *Charles the*

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* ROCHESTER hated DRYDEN for his talents, and ſought every occaſion to mortify him. CROWNE came in his way, and he prevailed upon the queen to give him the preference, when ſhe ſignified a wiſh to get a maſque written for the court. CROWNE, however, meeting with ſucceſs, ROCHESTER's envy was inſtantly excited, and he became the poor poet's implacable enemy, nay he went ſo far as to endeavour at injuring him with the king, to whom he inſinuated that he was lowly born and meanly educated, for which he was juſtly treated by the king with contempt, who from that moment took CROWNE into his favour. This is one tract among the numerous inſtances of mean and pitiful conduct in a man who was conſtant to nothing but profligacy He was brave with lord SANDWICH upon the court of Norway, and a coward with lord MULGRAVE in Hyde-park. A porter, a beggar, a fidler, a mountebank, every thing by turns; diſſolutely gay, groſsly ſenſual, with an avidity for knowledge that it might furniſh him with the means of miſchief; religious in profeſſions, blaſphemous in practice; ſober for five minutes, and drunk for five years; but as I have no obligation to be his biographer, ſo I ſhall here have done with him, noticing nothing further than that his pretenſions to be conſidered as a dramatic author are as falſe as the reſt of his conduct; for *Valentinian* and *Sodom*, the two wickedeſt plays that ever were written, though attributed to him, was the productions of others.

Eighth of France, 1672. This play has certainly merit, but is revolting on account of its being in verſe, though the ſubject is purely hiſtorical. Rochester was at that time his patron, and received all the homage which Crowne ſo laviſhly paid him in his dedication; but, to ſhew he was a total ſtranger to gratitude, feeling, or conſiſtency, he ridiculed this very play and this very author by name in his imitation of one of Boileau's ſatires. By the way thoſe dealers in tinſel, Cowley, and Boileau, were the poetic gods of Rochester's idolatry.

The Country Wit, 1675. This play is an imitation of Moliere's *Sicilien*. It contains a great deal of low wit, and perhaps is not the better for the poet's having been commanded to write it. *Andromache* is attributed to Crowne, but is nothing more than a tranſlation from Racine by ſome young gentleman of family, and ſuperintended by this author. It was ill received. *Caliſto*, 1675. This is the maſque which at the inſtance of Rochester the queen commanded Crowne to write. It was principally performed by noblemen and ladies of the court. *City Politics*, 1675, is a ſevere ſatire upon the Whigs, in which there are many perſonalities, frequently a dangerous, and always an unjuſt

meaſure. In the preſent inſtance it hurt both the author's profit and reputation; but it was impoſſible at that time to be on the court ſide without manifeſting ſome folly of this kind.

The Deſtruction of Jeruſalem, 1677. This tragedy is in two parts, and was conſidered as a work of merit. The ſame objection, however, lies againſt it as againſt *Charles the Eighth*. It is hiſtorical, and it is in verſe. This is the play that ſo ſtrongly excited ROCHESTER's jealouſy. *The Ambitious Stateſman*, which word ambitious is ſaid by an author to be an expletive, is ſtrongly written, but did not ſucceed. *Henry the Sixth*. There are two plays with this name, 1680, and 1681. One of them has the additional title of The *Miſeries of Civil War*. They are both imitated from SHAKESPEAR, but by no means improved. *Thyeſtes*, 1681. Of all the tranſlations of this play of SENECA this is the only one that ever had any thing like ſucceſs. It is, however, as muſt plainly be ſeen, heavy and declamatory; and, after all, though it might boaſt ſome ſterling points, it became naturally tireſome among a people ſo volatile as the Engliſh were at that time. *Sir Courtly Nice* was the laſt play this author produced before the Revolution. This

is, perhaps the beſt of CROWNE's comedies. It was taken by the command of CHARLES the ſecond, from a Spaniſh play which the king was very fond of. It has frequently been revived, and always with ſucceſs.

CHAP X.

BANKS, MRS. BEHN, RAVENSCROFT, AND TATE.

BANKS, a very indifferent yet rather a favourite writer, produced five tragedies which demand an examination in this place. His great and almoſt his only merit was the choice of affecting circumſtances which is particularly obvious in his firſt piece The *Rival Kings*, performed in 1677, which play, in ſpight of rant and bombaſt, the worſe for being his earlieſt attempt, is in ſome degree intereſting. It is taken from the romance of *Caſſandra*. The *Deſtruction of Troy*, 1679, was rather out of this author's beat. He knew better how to pleaſe thoſe who forgave nonſenſe in favour of tenderneſs, than to emulate the flights of HOMER and VIRGIL.

Virtue Betrayed, containing the ſtory of ANNA BULLEN, and performed in 1682, had ſucceſs becauſe, ſays LANGBAINE, it was written for the fair

ſex, which certainly is a compliment to their ſenſibility though not to their underſtandings|; for, though it is framed from a ſtory that every body knows to be affecting, yet it is written every where poorly, and in many places deſpicably. The *Unhappy Favourite* was performed in 1685, and is in every reſpect a much better play than the former. It is well known, and has greatly maintained an aſſendancy over theſe plays, written upon the ſame ſubject by JONES, BROOKE, and even RALPH. The fact is, the circumſtances are ſtrongly intereſting, and among a great deal of traſh there is ſome beauty. The *Iſland Queens, or the Death of Mary Queen of Scotland*, 1684, was prohibited. It was, however, publiſhed with a vindication and ſeems to have been on the ſtage ſince, for one of the editions bears the names in the dramatis perſonæ of WILKS, BOOTH, Mrs. OLDFIELD, and other performers of that time.

It is ſometimes unfortunate that one cannot do juſtice to the talents of great and celebrated men and women but it may happen to be the reverſe of praiſe; and really, when truth ſours into ſarcaſm inſtead of ſweetening into panegyric, it becomes rather an irkſome taſk to obey the dictates of ſuch a preciſe monitor. On this account I am not very

ſorry that I have but a ſmall portion of room to ſpare for my animadverſions on Mrs. BEHN and her plays; but this is the leſs to be regretted, as to the lady herſelf, becauſe all her pranks, including her platonic intimacy with OROONOKO, her becoming ſo great a favourite of CHARLES the ſecond as to be ſent on a ſecret embaſſy to HOLLAND, where another JUDITH in patriotiſm, ſhe made ſo innocent a diſplay of her charms, as to ſet the hearts of a Dutch admiral, a ſtateſman or two, and others Mynheers of eminence in ſuch a blaze as to put out the fire of the Engliſh ſhips at ROCHESTER; becauſe I ſay theſe and others of her inoffenſive gallantries have been, with notes, animadverſions, and vignettes, handed to all the young ladies in the kingdom who are ſubſcribers to the circulating libraries; and, as to her works, as they are principally diſtilled from the lees and dregs of all kinds of writers, a ſmall taſte of them will be quite ſtrong enough for a delicate ſtomach.

This lady to whom LANGBAINE gives the appellation of Aſtrea, others Aphara, others Aphra, but none Aſtarte, produced fifteen plays before the Revolution, and two afterwards. The *Forced Marriage* was a tragi-comedy, performed in 1671, of which no one can find out the ſucceſs. The *Amorous*

Prince 1671, was taken from The *Curious Impertinent*, and The *City Night Cap*, which circumſtance has been already noticed. It is a haſh with higher ſeaſoning. The *Dutch Lover*, 1673. This was all in Mrs. Behn's way. Her platonic amour with Vander Albert, when ſhe was in Holland, made her a perfect adept in Dutch courtſhip. It was a fat ſubject; and, to convince the reader ſhe meant it ſhould be luſcious, ſhe begins her preface with "Good ſweet honey ſugar-candied reader"

Abdalazar, or The *Moor's Revenge*, which Cibber ſays is very poorly written, was produced in 1677. The lady, however, could not reſiſt the ſubject, which is Marloe's *Luſt's Dominion*, or The *Laſcivious Queen*. Leſt it ſhould ſink under critical inveſtigation we will ſhow our forbearance by ſtopping at Cibber's deciſion. The *Town Fop*, 1677. This comedy is almoſt a tranſlation of The *Miſeries of Enforced Marriage*, written by Wilkins. The *Rover*, 1677, was witten in two parts. The ſcene of the firſt lies in Italy, and the other in Madrid; I ſuppoſe to ſhew gallantry in its proper element, and to ſhew what an excellent knack had this warm writer in heightening voluptuouſneſs. Langbaine, in his obſervations on theſe plays, ſays that ſhe has "ſlayed the eel by beginning at the tail." The

ſtories are borrowed, or ſtolen, as ſhe herſelf confeſſes, but the language is her own.

Sir Patient Fancy, 1670, is a mixture of MOLIERE's *Malade Imaginaire*, and Monſ. POURCEAUGNAC, with a little touch of BROME's *Damoiſelle*. The *Feigned Courtezans*, 1679. This is ſaid to be the beſt play of Mrs. BEHN's writing. I ſuppoſe they mean the higheſt ſeaſoned, for nothing can be ſo repugnant to decency and decorum as for ladies of honour to aſſume the characters of proſtitutes to gain the affections of men of honour; but the lady did not feel this at all, nor to what a degree ſhe inſulted delicacy by her dedication of this play to NELL GUIN *. The *City Heireſs*, 1682. I have already mentioned that Mrs. BEHN and

* This dedication, which for adulation is fairly a companion to that which DRYDEN addreſſed to the ducheſs of YORK, when he publiſhed his *State of Innocence*, is ſo full of meanneſs and ſervility that it will be curious to quote a part of it to ſhew how profuſely profligate women as well as men could be at that time of talents with which in ſuch caſes, they did every thing but dignify literature. Dr. JOHNSON ſays that, ſince the deifying the Roman emperors, there has been no hyperbolical adulation equal to theſe two dedications. But let the lady ſpeak for herſelf. "Your permiſſion, madam," ſays ſhe, "enlightened me, and I with ſhame look back on my paſt "ignorance, which ſuffered me not to pay an adoration long ſince

CHARLES JOHNSON divided MIDDLETON'S *Mad World my Maſters* between them; but there was very little contention for this bone, for the lady took all the fat and the marrow for her *City Heireſs*, and the gentleman all the lean for his *Country Laſſes*.

The *Falſe Count*, 1682. This comedy is written in a very low ſtyle, particularly the part of the *Chimney Sweeper*; but no doubt ſhe thought had done enough by having, for her ſecond title, *A New Way to play an Old Game*. The *Round Heads*, 1682, is, as its title announces, a party ſubject, and therefore not ſo much in this lady's way, her ſtyle being conjunction, not diviſion. *The Young King*, performed in 1683, is a tragi-comedy, and as incongruous as any thing that ever bore that deſignation. Mrs. BEHN'S dedication of this play is in natural and glowing language. She knew better how to addreſs a keeper than a kept miſtreſs. The *Lucky Chance*, or The *Alderman's Bargain*, 1687. This is a comedy in this lady's trueſt manner. One very

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"where there was ſo very much due; yet even now, though ſecure "in my opinion, I make this ſacrifice with infinite fear and trem- "bling, well knowing that ſo excellent and perfect a creature as "yourſelf differs only from the divine powers in this: the offerings "made to you ought to be worthy of you, whilſt they accept the "will alone."

curious circumſtance attended it, for it was very nearly being damned for its indecency, and obſcenity, which the critics would inſiſt it was full of, both in the action and the language. From this charge the good lady vindicated herſelf; not by proving, however, that it was not indecent, but that ſhe was no more indecent than her neighbours. She might have gone on and quoted *Shylock*. "You "take my houſe when you do take the prop that "doth ſuſtain my houſe." In ſhort it is impoſſible not to take the lady's part; for as ſhe had then produced thirteen plays, and all as good as this, it was rather a ſort of prudery and ſqueamiſhneſs in the town to begin their objections here. One thing to be ſure was againſt her. Hitherto ſhe had only heightened the indecent plots of others; this indecent plot was all of her own invention. With The *Emperor of the Moon*, performed alſo in 1687, we ſhall take leave of Mrs. Behn for the preſent, which was nothing more than a farce borrowed from an Italian opera that had been tranſlated into French. It was whimſical, and had ſome ſucceſs.

Ravenscroft, who was rather a compiler than an author, and who probably would not have been known to the world at this moment if Dryden had not lifted him into conſequence by condeſcending

to fear him, produced, before the revolution, nine plays. Their titles are *Mamamouchi*, The *Careleſs Lovers*, *Scaramouch*, The *Wrangling Lovers*, *Edgar and Elfrida*, The *Engliſh Lawyer*, The *London Cuckolds*, *Dame Dobſon*, and *Titus Andronicus*. Of all theſe plays we know nothing except that The *London Cuckolds*, the greateſt diſgrace the theatre ever ſuſtained, was for a long time performed on lord mayor's day. It is like the reſt a ſeries of theſts from beginning to end, and indeed the productions of this man aſcertain one very curious thing; which is, that they are ſo fairly tranſcriptions, or tranſlations, literally, that you can ſcarcely trace throughout the whole how he would have written had he made the attempt.

Tate, who wrote and altered nine plays, was a man of ſound erudition and good judgment. He is very little known however to the world except by his alteration of *Lear*, which, though by no means the beſt, is upon the whole the greateſt favourite of the public, for reaſons that I have already given. The reſt of his plays, not one of which is original, are called *Brutus of Alba*, The *Loyal General*, *Richard the Second*, The *Ingratitude of a Commonwealth*, *Cuckold's Haven*, *Duke and no Duke*, The *Iſland Princeſs*, and *Injured Love*.

There are a few obſcure authors alſo who compiled dramatic pieces about this period, one of whom was KIRKMAN. He mutilated twenty-ſeven pieces from SHAKESPEAR, FLETCHER, JONSON, and others. About a hundred and twenty plays were beſides produced by anonymous writers. In ſhort, almoſt any thing that came to the theatre was accepted and performed, and thus we count between ſix and ſeven hundred dramatic pieces, of one deſcription or other, brought forward in the interval between the death of JAMES the firſt and the Revolution; but it muſt be noticed that, though this was a period of ſixty-three years, many more than five hundred of theſe pieces were produced between the Reſtoration and the Revolution, which was only thirty-nine years and this upon an average is about fourteen plays a year.

BOOK VIII.

FROM THE REVOLUTION TO GARRICK.

CHAP. I.

STATE OF THE STAGE AT THE REVOLUTION AND ONWARDS TO 1708.

We have seen that, at the Reſtoration, the ſtage become a regular eſtabliſhment under two patents, that one company by calling in auxiliary aſſiſtance conquered the other, and that, after much contention and a ſtruggle between a variety of intereſts, all dramatic diſputes were amicably adjuſted by a union of the two companies in 1684; at which time they in one body performed in Drury Lane, and were called the King's Company.

In their expectations, however, of the probable

advantages that might ariſe from this coalition of intereſts, they were miſerably deceived. Scarcely had they ſat down under the comfortable idea that every man would conſider his neighbour's good and do his utmoſt to ſerve and aſſiſt the general concern, than the whole community began to be convulſed with different diſſentions. The united patentees impoſed what terms they thought proper on the actors; for the profits of the theatre were divided into twenty ſhares, ten of which went to the proprietors, who were ten in number, and the other moiety to the actors, in ſuch ſubdiviſions as their different merits entitled them to.

Here then are ten managers, or, as CIBBER calls them, taſk-maſters, ſome of them not in the remoteſt degree converſant with affairs of the theatre; but, as if this was not enough to create diſſentions, ſuch of theſe proprietors as were in needy circumſtances ſold their ſhares to money-lenders, or other ſpeculators, who though ſtill more ignorant of theatrical buſineſs had nevertheleſs a proportionate voice in the management of the concern. This was the ſituation of the theatre in 1690.

In proportion as ignorance uſurped authority, ſo the actors, who ought of courſe to be conſidered as

the real ſupporters of the theatre, began with reaſon to be diſſatisfied. The major part of this decemviri, wanting to cut up the hen for her golden eggs, thought they ſhould carry all the world before them by laying on foreign taſte and foreign decorations as thick as poſſible, which by the way at length produced the opera, ſince when without a ſingle deviation the maſs of the nobility have looked down with contempt on the theatre.

In conſequence of all this they preſently got into a ſuit in Chancery, which laſted twenty years. Had their meaſures been dictated by common ſenſe, ſtill every thing might have come about, but unhappily their conduct was not tinctured with that ingredient. The expence for ſpectacle was redoubled, foreigners were cheriſhed at any price, and not only the ſhare of the profits decreed to be divided between the actors was conſiderably reduced, but the actors themſelves were badly dreſſed and in every other reſpect neglected and held in contempt.

In the mean time their profits fell off every day; and, as in conſequence it was found neceſſary to leſſen the expence, inſtead of directing their at-

tention to the real grievance, they lowered ſtill more the emoluments of the actors; and, in order to manage as much to their own confuſion as poſſible, under a colour of juſtice they began with the principal performers, and upon their murmuring, to go from bad to worſe, brought forward young actors and actreſſes in the characters uſually played by the veterans. The natural conſequence of all this is evident. BETTERTON, a theatrical WARWICK, who had made and depoſed kings at pleaſure, began to look about him; and, getting into his plot the principal performers, they agreed to oppoſe their oppreſſors and ſtand or fall together.

All this, however, the patentees, ſecure in their power and covered with their foreign levies, treated with perfect indifference; but when they found that, by the intereſt of BETTERTON, the complaints of the actors were, through lord DORSET, lain before king WILLIAM, they began ſeriouſly to reflect on their ſituation. They were not, however, eaſily repulſed, and ſome of them knowing the world pretty well, and particularly RICH, who was a lawyer, ſuggeſted that by the law as it then ſtood no other patent could be granted. This, however, was looking a little farther than they could leap, for it was very nearly conſidered as an inſult to the crown, and

therefore the aggrieved parties had liberty to conſult the ableſt lawyers on the ſubject, who reported that the grants of CHARLES the ſecond did not preclude the right of any ſucceeding prince to grant a patent to any perſon with whom he might think proper to entruſt it.

This deciſion was ſeverely felt by the patentees, who, too late, ſincerely wiſhed for a reconciliation; which, had not the players been ſtrengthened with the acquieſcence of all ſenſible men that their cauſe was the cauſe of truth and honour, and therefore ought to be encouraged, could not now have been complied with, on account of their having gone ſo far and intereſted even government in their quarrel.

In this criſis queen MARY died; and, during the interval that the theatre was neceſſarily ſhut up, BETTERTON and his adherents had leiſure to purſue their plan of operations. In the mean time the oppoſite party were trying their utmoſt to gain over volunteers to their ſtandard. POWEL and VERBRUGGEN, whoſe ſallaries had been only forty ſhillings each, was now complimented with four pounds, and the reſt of the actors and actreſſes in proportion. BETTERTON, however, loſt nothing by this; for all

who felt themſelves properly aggrieved found his caſe to be their own and were as willing to emancipate from tyranny as he was. Every thing promiſed a favourable iſſue. They had an audience of the king who graciouſly diſmiſſed them with aſſurances of his favour and protection, and they were immediately empowered by his royal licence to act in a ſeparate theatre by themſelves.

Subſcriptions inſtantly, and moſt ſpiritedly, were ſet on foot, and it was agreed to erect a theatre within the walls of the Tennis Court in Lincoln's Inn Fields. As this, however, required time, the patentees were determined to uſe all their diligence to get the ſtart of them every way, and, therefore, opened on the following April with *Abdelazar, or the Moors Revenge*, written by Mrs. Behn, and introduced by an occaſional prologue, which was Cibber's firſt literary attempt. After the firſt night, however, they were completely deſerted, and the town, who had been accuſtomed to ſee the beſt actors, waited with impatient anxiety for the opening of the new theatre.

In about a fortnight their curioſity was gratified; for on the thirteenth of April, 1695, the new theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields opened with Congreve's

celebrated comedy of *Love for Love**; the ſucceſs of this play was ſo great that they ſcarcely found it neceſſary to perform any other throughout the whole ſeaſon. CONGREVE now accepted a whole ſhare to produce a play every year, excluſive of his profits from this comedy, in the ſame manner as DRYDEN did to produce two; ſome ſay four, but that I ſhall conteſt. His next play, however, The *Mourning Bride*, did not make its appearance till three years afterwards.

Thus Lincoln's-inn-fields went on favoured with ſplendid ſucceſs, while Drury-lane was completely deſerted, and indeed upon ſo natural and fair a principle that nobody regretted it. In time, however, the novelty of encouraging merit wore off; beſides many of the performers at Lincoln's-inn fields grew old and became enfeebled, while thoſe at the other houſe, being young and vigorous, came forward with ſome degree of force. CIBBER by this time

* This play had nearly fallen into the hands of the patentees of Drury-lane, for before the rupture between the managers and the actors it had been read and approved; but, while the articles of agreement were preparing, CONGREVE received an intimation of the premediated deſign, and, therefore, pauſed under a determination that the play ſhould go with the actors for whom he had written the parts.

had made a conſiderable progreſs both as an author and an actor, and they were reinforced by the plays of SOUTHERN and VANBRUGH, which made their dramatic novelties at leaſt five to one in number. In addition to this, BETTERTON's company, confident of their ſuperior merit, grew negligent with their ſucceſs, in proportion as the diſappointment of their competitors ſtimulated them to induſtry.

This brought on a ſort of recrimination between this theatre and the public, who were accuſed by the actors of capriciouſneſs, while they accuſed the actors in return of ſupineneſs and want of exertion. The conſequence was that the cauſe of neither houſe was heartily eſpouſed, and at length Lincoln's-inn-fields was obliged to follow the example of Drury-lane, and only pay their people in proportion to the ſucceſs of the concern. CIBBER tells us that the manager of Drury-lane never paid the people at all when the money did not come in, nor when it did except in ſuch proportion as ſuited his own convenience. "I was one of the many," ſays he, "who for ſix acting weeks together, never "received one day's pay; and for ſome years after "ſeldom had above one half our nominal ſalaries." No wonder then when the other houſe began to adopt a conduct ſo ſhameful, ſo unjuſt, and ſo diſ-

honeſt, the public ſhould begin to think their principles no better than thoſe of their neighbours; but now came a ſtroke of cunning, as RICH imagined, that whether or not it might benefit him was ſure to injure the intereſt of his adverſaries.

He had conceived that, as ſervants have generally the ear of their maſters and miſtreſſes, if he could ingratiate himſelf with thoſe he ſhould ſoon fill his boxes, to the deſertion of the other houſe. Footmen had never before this time been admitted into the theatre, except to wait the pleaſure of their employers, nor at all till after the four thact of the play. Determined therefore to ſecure their intereſt, he opened the upper gallery gratis for their reception, and "if he did this to get ap-"plauſe," ſays CIBBER, "he certainly ſucceeded, "for it often thundered from the full gallery above, "while the thin pit and ſcanty boxes below were "in a ſtate of perfect ſerenity." This ſhameful cuſtom, which continued ſo long, and was with ſuch difficulty ſhaken off, was the moſt flagrant diſgrace the theatre ever ſuſtained.

But he was not content with this. Conceiving that faſhionable bucks and ſprigs of quality would come to the theatre with more readineſs if they

could get acceſs to the actors and actreſſes, he admitted ſuch as would pay behind the ſcenes; a cuſtom that ſtruck at the very exiſtence of all decency and decorum, and indeed went to render the performance impracticable. This, however, CIBBER, when he came to be one of the managers, contrived as he tells us, at the hazard of their lives to aboliſh; "after which," ſays he, "we brought what had "before diſgraced the theatre into all the licences "of a lobby, into the decencies of a drawing-"room."

This was not all. Buffoonery, tumbling, rope-dancing, and every other diſgraceful ſpecies of mummery that was afterwards ſo ſucceſsfully practiſed by his ſon were exhibited through this ignorant and pretended director of the public taſte. It was at this moment that JEREMY COLLIER publiſhed a book againſt the ſtage. His ſtrictures go to the immorality of the plays, the profligacy of the performers, and the licentiouſneſs of the poets; and it muſt be confeſſed that, however he may have been too liberal of invective, he has fairly embraced the ſide of truth. All the indecency that condemned the plays of ETHERIDGE and others to oblivion, that more than once wrung from DRYDEN contrition and repentance that made that filthy and ſtupid play The

London Cuckolds, a ſtanding diſh with profligates, and, in ſhort, bad as the times were, that kept ladies from the new plays till they had enquired whether they might attend them without bluſhing, were manfully expoſed to that reprehenſion that no man could dare to ſay they did not ſeverely merit

The misfortune in COLLIER was, that, in not qualifying the buſineſs, he diſcovered the cloven foot. Had he recommended a reform, the advice had been wholeſome, and every friend to decorum would have thanked him; but nothing would content him but rooting out the evil by aboliſhing the ſtage itſelf; which, by all the world, had been ever acknowledged, if properly conducted, to be as wholeſome a vehicle for morality as the pulpit*. For this reaſon, and for this only, the wits had a fair occaſion to attack him, and DRYDEN, CONGREVE, VANBRUGH, DENNIS, and others levelled at him a

* A gentleman in the company of JOE HAINES, the famous actor, and wit, ſaid he could not conceive what induced Mr. COLLIER to inſiſt upon the total ſuppreſſion of the ſtage, when it had only been abuſed by the licentiouſneſs of a few of its members. "Why," ſaid HAINES, "the ſtage was inſtituted to mend the morals, and "COLLIER, being by profeſſion a moral mender, he quarrels with "it, upon the principle that two of a trade can never agree."

volley of keen ſatire. They had, however, a bad cauſe to defend, for they could neither refute his general arguments, nor exculpate themſelves; nay they injured the cauſe they eſpouſed, for the public, ever in the right on the ſide of all that's true and honourable, felt fuller conviction from their lame defence, and the controverſy finiſhed ſo far in favour of COLLIER that the town reſolved indecency ſhould no longer be conſidered as wit; and thus, "by degrees," ſays CIBBEER, "the fair ſex "came again to fill the theatre on the firſt day of a "new comedy without fear or cenſure."

Thus COLLIER's work did much both for himſelf and the ſtage, for the general drift of it was conſidered ſo laudable by all perſons, but eſpecially by the king, that he granted him a *noli proſequi* which relieved him from the penalty of the law in conſequence of ſome impropriety in his political conduct; ſome ſay abſolving two traytors before their execution, but this was not all. The ſtage afterwards was narrowly watched; obſcene expreſſions in former plays were obliged to be expunged; and nothing new was produced before it underwent the examination of a licencer. In conſequence of this many were proſecuted by government for uttering profane or indecent expreſſions,

among whom BETTERTON and Mrs. BRACEGIRDLE were acually fined.

It is to be very much lamented that, when they were prohibiting indecent words, they did not prohibit indecent actions, but the contrary was the caſe; for all that the plays loſt with the profligates by being deprived of what they conſidered as the *ſel poignant*, the poſturing and tumbling made up for; which gained ground ſo faſt that at length the company in Lincolns Inn Fields were obliged in their own defence to adopt the ſame conduct, and thus they went on, exciting veneration mixed with pity, till VANBRUGH, who had left Drury Lane, ſuggeſted, as a new attraction, the building of a ſplendid houſe in the Haymarket, for the purpoſe of performing as well ſpectacles as plays.

It has been generally imagined, and indeed frequently aſſerted, that the Italian opera was not attempted in ENGLAND till about the year 1700; but this certainly is not the fact. It was imported ſoon after BETTERTON took his trip to PARIS for ſcenes, and this is very natural; for the French finding from that circumſtance the avidity with which the Engliſh ſwallowed novelty, ſent, as we have ſeen, firſt CAMBERT, and afterwards many others, and I have al-

ready noticed that PURCEL, in 1685, complains of this innovation which he ſays had too long prevailed.

This ſpecies of amuſement, however, was in no ſtate of perfectneſs, even ſo early as 1700, nor, indeed, till here as in France the opera ſingers poſſeſſed an excluſive theatre. The theatre in the Haymarket was built in 1705, and at that time the principal ſinger, always a eunuch, ſung his part in Italian while all the other characters ſung and recited their parts in Engliſh. VALENTINI was the FARINELLI of that time, and we don't find that the ladies of faſhion then, in abſurd encouragement, or extravagent praiſe of what they could neither taſte nor underſtand, were a little behind thoſe of the preſent time.

Opera, however, was the word; and, without aſſiſtance from this auxiliary, it would have been conſidered as madneſs to have opened the new theatre. With the combined merit of CONGREVE and VANBRUGH, however, and ſuch other authors as of courſe would have been glad to ſhield their reputations under ſuch a protection at a diſtance from the folly and ignorance that marked the proceedings of the other houſe, it appears to have been the laſt ſtep they ſhould have dreamt of. They gave into

the abſurdity nevertheleſs and the theatre opened in great ſtyle, with a tranſlated opera to Italian muſic, called The *Triumph of Love*. Which after all their pains and expence met with a very cool reception.

They now began to ſee in what their real force conſiſted; and what they ſhould have done by choice at firſt they were conſtrained to do at laſt. VANBRUGH brought out that pleaſant, and indeed valuable comedy, The *Confedercy*. Its ſucceſs, however, did not anſwer their expectations, and it was now all of a ſudden diſcovered that the fault lay in the conſtruction of the theatre, which was ſo built, with all VANBRUGH's architectural knowledge, that it was impoſſible for the auditors to hear any thing diſtinctly. He brought out three more comedies that year, all of which received applauſe, and were pretty well followed; but the ſame complaints was conſtant and general. The ſituation of the theatre was alſo objected to. The Haymarket being at ſuch a diſtance from the city and the inns of court, and hackney coaches at that time being very indifferent and not ſo well to be afforded as now. Drury Lane therefore picked up a tolerable audience to little expence while the Haymarket, with all its grandeur, had empty benches.

BETTERTON, whether tired of adventuring or of

trouble, in 1607, prevailed upon his co-partners to diſſolve their agreement, and place themſelves under the direction of CONGREVE and VANBRUGH. BETTERTON himſelf at this time was paſſed ſeventy, Mrs. BETTERTON, and UNDERHILL were ſuperannuated penſioners, and SMITH, KYNASTON, SANDFORD, and LEIGH were dead; while CONGREVE and VANBRUGH, however they might ſupply the theatre with novelty, were little capable of making engagements with other actors; who, notwithſtanding his ill treatment of them, RICH had the cunning to keep to himſelf. It ſhould ſeem as if CONGREVE had foreſeen all this; for, fairly diſguſted with the concern, he brought out nothing but *Semele*, a very ſhort piece, and, making VANBRUGH a preſent of his ſhare, retired; ſo that the ſtory of having left the public, through the ill reception of The *Way of the World*, is not true, for that comedy was performed in 1700 at Lincoln's Inn Fields.

Theſe ſteps having been taken, VANBRUGH found himſelf unequal to the taſk of ſuſtaining the whole concern, and heartily wiſhed either to be relieved from it by a purchaſer or a coalition with the other theatre. The latter expedient he knew, however, could not be attempted without extreme caution, for that his opponent, in addition to his natural and profeſſional keeneſs, having had ſo many diffi-

culties to weather would of courſe, not only be upon his guard, but feel a degree of triumph and exultation at a proſpect of having it in his power, through the medium of a treaty, to dictate arrogant and ſelf-advantageous terms. He, therefore gave the world to underſtand that nothing was farther from his intention than parting with the concern, but that, in order to have leiſure to provide it with novelty, and to look into the more material parts of its conduct, and management, he ſhould have no objection to let it to any perſon willing to adventure in it, intending at the ſame time to back it with every aſſiſtance in his power, for a valuable conſideration.

Rich, in the mean time, we ſhall preſently ſee to what purpoſe, was playing a much deeper ſtake than Vanbrugh. His own private conſiderations were complex and diſtreſſing. He had harraſſed his partners with ſuch vexatious demands, and teazed them with ſuch continual litigation, put them to ſuch expences, and warded off by chicanery the ill conſequences of ſo many contempts of court, that ſeveral of thoſe concerned in the ſcheme were glad to ſell their ſhares for inconſiderable trifles, which were bought up by Rich's agents with their own money; till at length, ſir Thomas Shipwith, the only remaining partner of any conſequence gave

away his ſhare to colonel BRETT, who having a good deal intereſted himſelf in the management, and brought the concern into ſome repute, SHIPWITH repented of his generoſity and applied to the Court of Chancery for relief; upon which BRETT threw up the matter moſt heartily diſguſted, and the queſtion, lying only between RICH and SHIPWITH, the latter, through ſuperior cunning, was ouſted, and the former remained in excluſive poſſeſſion of the whole property, as I ſhall ſhew hereafter more particularly.

All this train of events were agitating when RICH's ſpies and, indeed public rumour, reported VANBRUGH's inclination to form an alliance, and now came what RICH conceived to be his maſter ſtroke. He had for ſome time retained in his councils the man in the world whom he ſaw was beſt calculated to adviſe him in his perplexed ſtate of mind, but he did not ſee that he was alſo the beſt calculated to over-reach him. To this man, whoſe name was SWINEY, did RICH open his heart and, as he knew VANBRUGH's earneſtneſs to get rid of the Haymarket, it was agreed that SWINEY ſhould take it, as an intereſt apparently apart from RICH, but that he ſhould be privately under his controul. An interview was in conſequence ſomehow procured between VANBRUGH and SWINEY, who pretended

that he was anxious to adventure for himself, and it was, after some deliberation, and another meeting or two, agreed that SWINEY should take the whole concern off VANBRUGH's hands, upon paying five pounds on every day of performance, the whole sum not to exceed seven hundred a year.

This done, RICH was perfectly at ease. Indeed more so than he ought to have been. He had hoped to have SWINEY under his thumb, and for that purpose, among other holds on him, had taken care that he should be two hundred pounds in his debt. SWINEY, however, for some time kept his compact rigidly, seeing very plainly that could he once get the town, RICH would be no obstacle to his making a fortune, and this he had no doubt of, as he had made it one part of his agreement, which by the way was verbal, to receive whatever disconted actors might think proper to make an asylum of the Haymarket. It was now his business to ingratiate himself with those actors as much as possible; and, having gained over a few, whom he took care to pay punctually, others liked this lure so well, that at length he got the whole strength of the company, led by WILKS, ESTCOURT, MILLS, KEEN, JOHNSON, BULLOCK, Mrs. OLDFIELD, and Mrs. ROGERS, and afterwards CIBBER.

Having now ſuch ſtrength, he preſſed RICH to reduce to writing, and execute formally the agreement between them, which had ſtipulated that SWINEY's name ſhould appear as the manager of the Haymarket theatre, but that they ſhould divide the profits between them. This he ſeemed the more earneſt to accompliſh, becauſe he knew RICH too well to believe that he would ever conſent to it; for his intention all along was, by his power over SWINEY, to be able to declare his agreement good or void, juſt as might ſuit his convenience, after an experiment ſhould have been made of the ſucceſs of the ſcheme; and thus, if the Haymarket loſt, he might diſclaim any ſhare in it, if it gained, he might claim his proportion of the emolument.

SWINEY would not be put by; he declared for a full partnerſhip or a perfect independance; and, having made his agreement with VANBRUGH, in his own name, who was well enough ſatisfied with his punctuality thitherto, he fairly put the queſtion to him: upon which an open rupture took place, and SWINEY, whom he had from the beginning intended to uſe as his tool, became his equal, and his powerful opponent, while his ingeniouſneſs entitled him to the good opinion of the world.

It now became the general opinion, that the two

theatres would reſpectivelycarry on their operations, and that a generous emulation would gratify the town and fill their treaſuries. RICH, however, became more untractable than ever. The dancers were one time going to leave him out of jealouſy of a live elephant, which he had advertiſed to exhibit, and his rope-dancers became ſo intolerably impudent, that upon an appeal to the audience by the actors, he was obliged to diſmiſs them. But it is ſaid that it was out of this ſort of confuſion he enriched himſelf; that he was uneaſy at good ſucceſs becauſe it made him accountable to his partners, and pleaſed when every thing went wrong, becauſe they muſt then be accountable to him; and thus, by "law and delay," ſays CIBBER, "he ſo tired "his enemies that he became ſole monarch of his "theatrical empire, and left the quiet poſſeſſion of "it to his ſucceſſors."

It was this kind of litigious ſpirit that ſo heartily tired SHIPWITH. the only remaining opponent of any conſequence, that he gave away his ſhare to Colonel BRETT; who, being a man of ſpirit and a leader of the faſhionable world, reſolved to uſe a little laudable induſtry to get the ſtage into ſomething like reputation. In his conduct he implicitly followed the advice of CIBBER, who, with conſummate art and induſtry, had been teaching himſelf all

his life the complete myſtery of a manager. He ſaw that a union of the two companies was the only ſalvation of their character and their conſequence; and BRETT, under CIBBER's direction, availed himſelf of his intimacy with the Vice Chamberlain to accompliſh this deſirable end. His ſcheme was to have one theatre for plays and another for operas, under ſeparate intereſts; by which means the united force of all the dramatic talents would be concentrated into one company, and ſpectacle and exhibitions of mere ſhew and ſplendour be kept apart in its proper province.

This was all SWINEY wanted. ITALY had by this time heard of Engliſh impatience to hear their beſt ſingers. People of faſhion had at their own inſtance invited the famous NICOLINI; and, after a proper and a fair ſtipulation, regulated by the Lord Chamberlain, that he ſhould receive no moleſtation from RICH, it was ſettled that operas ſhould be performed excluſively at the Haymarket, and plays at Drury Lane; to which place all the actors were ordered to return, and perform under the direction of the patentees, and to be conſidered as her majeſty's only company of comedians.

CHAP. II.

ACTORS.

SINCE RHODES collected his company together, immediately before the Reſtoration, we have ſeen nothing of actors, or conſidered their reſpective merits. It will now be neceſſary to make up for this time, which I will not call loſt, becauſe I think the ſubject will be better diſcuſſed, by introducing all the ſubjects into one view, than if I had handled it piece-meal.

It has been conſtantly aſſerted, that acting had arrived at its height of perfection in SHAKESPEAR'S time; and that LOWIN, TAYLOR, ALLEYN, BURBAGE, and the reſt of that ſet had carried the repreſentation of human manners to the higheſt pitch of truth aud nature. In what way this has been inſiſted on, and for what reaſons, the reader has already ſeen, and it muſt be confeſſed the argument is full of feaſibility. When we come forwarder, this account is corroborated, and at the ſame time it is in

ſiſted, that though the actors between the Reſtoration and the Revolution were materially inferior to thoſe in the reign of JAMES the firſt, it is allowed on all hands that they were greatly ſuperior to thoſe which have appeared ſince.

When the two theatres were eſtabliſhed at the Reſtoration, the King's Company was ſupported as principal performers by HART, MOHUM, BURT, WINTERTON, LACY, CARTWRIGHT, and CLUN, to whom in a ſhort time were added HAINES, GRIFFIN, GOODMAN, and ſome others. The principal women were Mrs. CORY, Mrs. MARSHALL, Mrs. KNAPP, and afterwards Mrs. BOUTEL, and Mrs ELEANOR GWYN. The Duke's Company conſiſted of LEE TERTON, SHEPPY, KYNASTON, NOKES, MOSELY, and FLOOD, who had all performed under RHODES Shortly afterwards they were reinforced by PRICE, RICHARDS, and BLAGDEN, and again by SMITH, SANDFORD, MEDBOURNE, and others. The actreſſes were Mrs. DAVENPORT, Mrs. SAUNDERS, whom ETTERTON married, Mrs. DAVIES, and Mrs. LONG, beſides Mrs. GIBBS, Mrs. NORRIS, Mrs. HOLDEN, and Mrs. JENNINGS.

Many of theſe actors, if we are to believe the moſt diſpaſſionate and rational accounts of them,

were not were auricular imitators, nor manneriſts, not copies of this or that particular whim, fancy, deportment, voice, or manner; but judges of nature through all her various workings, and cloſe obſervers of all the paſſions that move and actuate the mind of man. Nay, more, they were all perfect and complete maſters in thoſe different ſtyles of acting in which they choſe to diſplay their ſeveral abilities.

"BETTERTON," ſays CIBBER, "was an actor "as SHAKESPEAR was an author, both without "competitors; formed for the mutual aſſiſtance and "illuſtration of each other's genius. How SHAKES-"PEAR wrote, all men who have a taſte for nature "may read and know; but with what higher rapture "would he ſtill be read, could they conceive how "BETTERTON played him! Then might they know "that one was born alone to ſpeak what the other "only knew to write." There are ſo many vouchers for the merit of this extraordinary actor, that there would be no great difficulty in aſcertaining, or riſk in aſſerting preciſely what they were. I muſt content myſelf, however, with ſaying that it has been unanimouſly allowed, his perſonal and mental qualifications for the ſtage were correct to perfection, and, that after a variety of arguments to prove this, we are obliged to confeſs that he appears never

to have been on the ſtage for a ſingle moment the actor, but the character he performed*.

KYNASTON, who performed the parts of women in his youth, of lovers in his maturer age, and of genteel old men later in life, is ſaid to have not only poſſeſſed a grace and an eaſe that nothing ever ſurpaſſed, but to have thrown a peculiar dignity into every thing he performed. We are told that though BETTERTON and KYNASTON both obſerved the rules of truth and nature, they were each as different in their acting as in their form or features. This we

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* In the early part of my life, I was very fond of every thing dramatic, and particularly curious to learn whatever I could relative to the Old School, as it was then called, but which appellation is now given to the School of GARRICK. During the two laſt years of RICH's life, old STEED, who was at that time eighty, and who had been many years promptor of Covent-Garden theatre, was my theatrical mentor. On ſome of his obſervations I ſhall, as neceſſity may occur, remark, as well as avail myſelf of anecdotes with which he furniſhed me. He was, as may be imagined, a moſt ſerved advocate for the preceding race of performers, and did not ſpare RICH, who, in imitation of his father, had lowered the ſtage by pantomimes and buffoonery. This was the very time when RICH was getting up the Coronation. I heard, therefore, of courſe all his ſentiments; which, though ſomewhat bigotted, were pretty candid, and his opinion of BETTERTON was, that, though he allowed all his various merits as they had been deſcribed by CIBBER and his other admirers, yet taking every thing into conſideration, he was by no means equal to GARRICK.

know is requiſite, and this particular diſcrimination ſeems to have made up a great part of the excellent acting of that time.

MONTFORD has a very warm character given of him by thoſe who knew him. His perſon was very fine and his voice melodious and winning. STEED uſed to compare him to BARRY, but conſidered him as a ſuperior actor, for that he was equally excellent when as the conqueror of the world he ſued to STATIRA for pardon, and when in Mirable he gave additional brilliancy to the bon mots of CONGREVE. He is ſaid to have had ſo much in him of the agreeable, that when he played Mrs. BEHN's diſſolute character of the Rover, it was remarked by many, and particularly by queen MARY, that it was dangerous to ſee him act he made vice ſo alluring.

SANDFORD is ſuppoſed to have been the completeſt and moſt natural performer of a villain that ever exiſted. One would think, had it been poſſible, that SHAKESPEAR, when he made King John excuſe his intention of perpetrating the death of Arthur by his comments on Hubert's face, by which he ſaw the aſſaſin in his mind, had SANDFORD in idea, for he was rather deformed and had a moſt for-

bidding countenance. The town, therefore, though the private character of this actor was perfectly amiable, could never endure him in any part in which there was the remoteſt ſimilitude to honour or fair dealing *.

Such, with all the reiterated praiſes that language can furniſh, were the commendations given to theſe and other actors of tragedy by their cotemporaries, and in thoſe praiſes we ſee ſo much juſtice and propriety that we are obliged to acknowledge their extraordinary merit. The comic performers by the ſame accounts did not lag a whit behind their brothers of the buſkin in fame and reputation. NOKES is deſcribed as an actor of ſo plain and palpable a ſimplicity, ſo perfectly his own, that

* STEED related to me a whimſical inſtance of this. In a new play, the author had allotted SANDFORD a character full of rectitude and the moſt honourable ſentiments. The audience, who had been accuſtomed to ſee SANDFORD in parts of a contrary caſt, imagined that all this honeſty was put on, and therefore applauded the author for his art and management in having drawn the character of a villain in ſuch diſſimulating colours, as would give great novelty and force to the denouement. But when they came to find that no friend had been betrayed, no ruin plotted, no deſtruction accompliſhed, but on the contrary that SANDFORD turned out as honeſt a man at laſt as at firſt, they fairly damned the play as an impoſition upon their underſtandings.

he was as diverting in his common ſpeech as on the ſtage. It is told of him that a nobleman, hearing him relate to the performers behind the ſcenes a converſation that he had been witneſs of the day before, aſked if he was repeating a new part.

NOKES it is ſaid was ſo perfectly original that ESTCOURT, with all thoſe powers of mimicry for which he was ſo famous could not catch the ſlighteſt glimpſe of him, and the reaſon is plain. Mimics can imitate nothing but affected peculiarities; NOKES had none of theſe. Very elaborate deſcriptions have been given, by CIBBER and others, to ſhew that he went through a large diverſity of parts, and deſcribed feelings and paſſions in a manner ſo faithful to nature that his comic diſtreſſes could not have been more natural had they ariſen in himſelf, and taken birth in his own mind, which is ſaying in other words that he was never NOKES but the character he aſſumed.

LEIGH was fraught with humour of a more luxuriant kind. He was full of variety and perfectly juſt to whatever character he repreſented. His merit, however was rather aſſumption than reality; which, for characters full of peculiarities, is, in performers of quick conception and ſtrong intel-

lects, a good ſpecies of acting; for, through this forcible mode of colouring, they heighten parts but faintly drawn, and add freſh force to thoſe already prominent. This was LEIGH's peculiar forte. He gave ſo ſtrong an effect to the ſly and demure wickedneſs of the Spaniſh Friar, in thoſe ſcenes where he connived at the intrigue between Lorenzo and the wife of Gomez, and was ſo ſtern and ſo overbearing when the ſituation required an exertion of clerical pride and ſacerdotal inſolence, that the poet's outline of the character would have been nothing without this admirable finiſh by the actor; and, upon other occaſions he lifted parts into conſequence as much above their uſual level as he exalted this and others beyond even the conception of thoſe who wrote them.

UNDERHIL was ſomething between NOKES and LEIGH. He was true to nature in his acting both from adventitious endowments and good ſenſe. He performed thoſe parts which, though they are conſidered as ſecondary in plays, require very frequently more judgment than thoſe which are called principal, and at the ſame time demand a mode of acting perfectly conſiſtent and natural. Such characters are the very ſinews of a play, and ought to be knit by the author with ſtrength, and exerted by the actor with

judgment. Theſe parts are the fathers and guardians, ſuch for inſtance as Sir Sampſon Legend in *Love for Love*. He was alſo remarkable in the Grave-digger in *Hamlet*, and the *Tatler* recommends him to the town upon that play's being acted for his benefit.

Theſe actors of whom I have thought it neceſſary to give this deſcription were the flower of that company which united in 1684, at which time, as I have already obſerved, HART, who alſo was an excellent actor, had left the ſtage. MOHUN was dead, and ſeveral others were either dead or had retired. GOODMAN, CLARK, and many more might alſo be ſpoken of with great propriety, for it is a remarkable thing, which by the way I never ſaw ſince I have known the ſtage but in the time of GARRICK, and never correctly with him except in thoſe plays he acted himſelf, that let their ſituations be principal or ſubordinate it was their ſtudy to be reſpectable. The underlings felt like apprentices at a trade of which every one hoped to become in time a maſter. They thought it the height of abſurdity to expect to arrive at perfection till it could be gradually attained; they conſidered it as building in the air and ornamenting the ſuperſtructure before they had lain the foundation, and the poſition is ſo juſt, that I'll

venture to say half the crudities which we have been so often astonished and disgusted at, and which at length get into hardnesses and take every form but nature, are entirely owing to first appearances in principal characters; but I leave with the recollection of the public how many who have pursued this dangerous road ever arrived to the achme of their art.

This observation applies to women in particular who have very seldom arrived to perfection as actresses before the female graces have in some degree left them. "The short life of beauty," says an author, "is not long enough to form a complete ac-"tress," and the separate merits of almost every actress I shall have to dwell on will bear out this assertion. Before, however, I enter upon that task I shall go on with my account of the actors till 1708.

Powel, who was added to the company soon after its union felt an early ambition to perform capital parts; and, when Rich quarrelled with his actors and Betterton had it in his idea to leave him, with the utmost presumption Powell agreed to accept of his characters, some of which he took possession of and almost the whole of Montford's, when Wilks having arrived from Ireland, was

expected to do wonders. This is the ſtrongeſt light I can put the merit of theſe actors into. WILKS whoſe abilities, which were promiſing though raw and unformed, would have ſunk to nothing upon a compariſon with BETTERTON and MONTFORD, became a ſucceſsful rival to POWEL, who in dudgeon walked off to Lincoln Inn Fields. WILKS, however, improved every day, and in time, in ſpight of ſome peculiarities, became an excellent actor; while POWELL, after trying one winter with BETTERTON, where he was more loſt than ever, returned to his old quarters, and after a ſhort contention fairly gave up the palm to his competitor.

WILKS was a ſober induſtrious man, and POWEL a very different character; circumſtances which, in particular after COLLIER's book, weighed conſiderably in the opinion of the public. It is remarkable that BOOTH, who, in the very year WILKS left DUBLIN for Drury Lane, left it alſo for Lincoln's Inn Fields, and who had in IRELAND been a pretty free lover of the bottle, was, ſome time after his arrival in LONDON, ſo ſhocked at the contempt and diſtreſs that POWEL had plunged himſelf into by the vice of hard drinking, that he inſtantly made a reſolution, which he never broke, of utterly abandoning that practice, and to this circumſtance there can be

no doubt but the world are indebted for ſo admirable an actor.

VERBRUGGEN, PINKETHMAN, WILLIAMS, BULLOCK, and others, were actors of conſiderable merit in their way, and DOGGET, more generally known to us by his coat and badge than his acting, is ſaid to have poſſeſſed ſuch natural comic powers that it was CONGREVE's delight to write for him; but I ſhall have better occaſion to mention him hereafter, when I deſcribe him as manager in conjunction with CIBBER and WILKS, at which time I ſhall deliver my ſentiments of CIBBER, a man whoſe whole life was acting and management, who knew dramatic conduct intuitively, who without any very ſtriking requiſites, either as an author or as an actor, held a very reſpectable ſituation in both capacities, and who ſeems to have ſeen ſo far into the womb of time as to diſcover when he had only fifteen ſhillings a week, that he ſhould one day have a thouſand a year as a manager beſides his emoluments as an author.

Having taken a curſory view of the actors I ſhall now ſpeak of the different merits of the actreſſes, among whom Mrs. BARRY ſeems to claim the preference, and of whom DRYDEN ſays in his

preface to *Cleomenes*, "Mrs. BARRY always excel-"lent, has in this tragedy excelled herſelf, and gained "a reputation beyond any woman I have ſeen on "the theatre." We are told, that however DRYDEN might have been charmed with this lady at that time and however truly ſhe might have deſerved his panegyric, ſhe was by no means arrived to that perfection that ſhe afterwards attained; that if her acting was then meritorious, it was afterwards incomparable, and that for nearly forty years ſhe continued to improve in judgment and diſcrimination—a ſtrong proof of the obſervation I quoted juſt now.

Mrs. BARRY in characters of greatneſs, is ſaid to have been graceful, noble, and dignified; that no violence of paſſion was beyond the reach of her feelings, and that in the moſt melting diſtreſs and tenderneſs ſhe was exquiſitely affecting. Thus ſhe was equally admirable in Caſſandra, Cleopatra, Roxana, Monimia, or Belvidera. She was the firſt actreſs who was indulged with a benefit play, a favour for ſome time after given only as a diſtinction of merit.

Mrs. BETTERTON was remarkable for performing the female characters of SHAKESPEAR to a

greater degree of excellence than any other actreſs before or ſince, which exhibits a moſt ſtriking proof that ſhe muſt have been critically a judge of nature; for though many of them are purpoſely underwritten becauſe they were performed in SHAKESPEAR'S time by men, yet there is a feminine truth and beauty in them more winning than all we find in thoſe overcharged characters, which in ſome of the more modern tragedies, a mode we have borrowed from the French, ſeem to have all the conduct of the piece. The fact is, that when women come to grace the ſtage, the authors were ſo delighted at this pleaſurable and advantageous circumſtance, that they did not know how to huſband it, but as much overſhot the mark as their predeceſſors had come ſhort of it. It is related of Mrs. BETTERTON, that though Lady Macbeth had been frequently well performed, no actreſs, not even Mrs. BARRY, could in the ſmalleſt degree be compared to her. Her judgment as an actreſs is ſaid to have been ſo conſummate, that no female performer ſucceeded who did not imitate her, or failed who did.

Mrs. LEIGH was a comic performer, and eminently ſucceſsful in ſuch parts as Lady Wiſhfort. Mrs. BUTLER was equally excellent in coquettes, but Mrs. MONTFORD, and Mrs. BRACEGIRDLE,

were moſt admirable comic actreſſes indeed. It is ſuppoſed that no actreſs ever performed ſo variouſly as Mrs. MONTFORD. She had every ſpecies of native humour at command; ſhe was equally natural in characters of high and low life, and would with the ſame eaſe and fidelity perſonate an affected coquette in a drawing room, and a dowdy in a cottage; to all which ſhe added the talents of being a moſt inimitable mimic, and is ſaid to have played Bayes in the *Rehearſal* upon a particular occaſion, probably a benefit, with more variety than had ever been thrown into it before.

Mrs. BRACEGIRDLE, a name that has always been mentioned with great reſpect, both on account of her public merit, and her private virtues, rendered herſelf a valuable ornament to the theatre, and to ſociety. She had many admirers and authors, when they have vied with each other in ſcenes of tenderneſs, are ſaid to have written them only to make their court to her. As to her acting, both authors and performers courted the aſſiſtance of her talents, which were univerſal. She equally delighted in melting tenderneſs and playful coquetry, in Statira, or Millamant, and even at an advanced age, when ſhe played Angelica in *Love for Love*, for BETTERTON's benefit, ſhe retained all her power of pleaſing.

Having noticed ſix actreſſes, who made up, in CIBBER's opinion, together with thoſe actors I have mentioned from BETTERTON to UNDERHILL, thirteen performers, who for great, various, and extraordinary talents, never had, or could have their equal. I ſhall defer introducing Mrs. OLDFIELD, Mrs. ROGERS, and thoſe other females who were at this time coming forward, by way of a gradual ſucceſſion, and who, when the companies were united in 1708, had given no mean proof of their progreſs towards perfection.

CHAP. III.

SHADWELL, SEDLEY, &c. RESUMED.

SHADWELL brought out The *Squire of Alſatia*, in the very year of the revolution. This play is founded upon the *Adephi* of TERENCE; and, for a ſubject that had then, and has been ſince ſo repeatedly treated, it is by no means a bad play. There is, however, too much of the low and the vulgar in it, and when it was revived by WOODWARD on his return from Ireland, though it was admirably acted, it on this account was ſoon withdrawn. It had originally ſo much cant, or what is vulgarly called ſlang, that the author was obliged to add a gloſſary to the publication.

Bury Fair, 1689, was borrowed from the Duke of NEWCASTLE's *Triumphant Widow*, and *Les Precieuſes Ridicules* of MOLIERE. DAVENANT, BETTERTON, and Mrs. BEHN, nibbled at the ſame bait,

which, however it might catch them, was not so easily swallowed by their audiences. The *Amorous Bigot*. This was a party play, which, speaking of the circumstance of Teague O'Divelly, I have described in another place. The *Scowerers*, 1693, was his last play, and, perhaps the most indifferent of them all, which will be credited when the reader is informed that it is much lower and more vulgar than the *Squire of Alsatia*, without half so good a vehicle to convey effect or interest. Let us then take leave of SHADWELL; a writer certainly of merit enough to convince the world, that however, if personality were allowable, FLECKNOE deserved in his own right DRYDEN's most caustic satire, the ridicule aimed at SHADWELL, had less in it of truth and justice, than envy and disappointment.

The dramatic pieces of SEDLEY after the Revolution were *Beauty the Conqueror, or the Death of Marc Anthony*, which was written on the Roman model, and therefore never acted. The *Grumbler*, which did very ill at first, and worse since, when it was cut down to a farce, and The *Tyrant, King of Crete*, a play, which though published in this author's works, was never performed. The character of SEDLEY cannot be known from his plays, which, like the productions of the fine gentlemen of that

time, were chiefly written for amuſement. The latter part of his life was decorous, and indeed exemplary. He was, however, a *bon vivant*, to the laſt, and died as a poet expreſſes it, "with a jeſt in his "mouth, and a tear in his eye."

Lee produced, 1689, The *Princeſs of Cleves*, and in 1690, The *Maſſacre of Paris*. His beſt dramatic merit was however paſt: the firſt of theſe plays, though it has fits and ſtarts of fire and energy, is declamatory and deſultory, and the other has too much frenzy and too little regularity, but we muſt not wonder at this, for theſe two plays were written after he had been confined in Bedlam four years, to which place his ſtrong mind and his exceſs of ſenſibility forced him; a circumſtance that ought to reſpite many an indiſcriminate denunciation ready to iſſue from the lips of uncandid critics, in favour of that hard, that difficult, that thankleſs toil which men of genius endure, when for precarious fame they generouſly diffuſe the light of knowledge to chear their fellow creatures.

Settle produced eight plays after the Revolution. *Diſtreſſed Innocence, or the Princeſs of Perſia*, had good ſucceſs; it is impoſſible, however, to add deſervedly. The auhor acknowledges many

obligations to BETTERTON and MOUNTFORD, who wrote between them ſeveral ſcenes in it. If this indifferent play ſucceeded, to balance accounts, The *Ambitious Slave*, a piece of more merit, was damned, *Philaſter* was of courſe BEAUMONT and FLETCHER'S play with alterations; but they were not judicious, and what was more unfortunate, the town thought ſo. Theſe three plays were performed in 1691, 1694 and 1695. The *World in the Moon*, 1697, was a kind of opera which SETTLE wrote to curry favour with RICH, to whom it was dedicated. It was brought out to diſplay decoration, and ſo far anſwered the intnded purpoſe.

The *Virgin Propheteſs*, 1701, is a ſtrange mad play written from the ſtory of *Caſſandra*. It was a kind of opera; but it did very little, notwithſtanding RICH, who was at that time uſing SETTLE as one of his tools, did his utmoſt to puſh it forward. The *City Ramble*, ſtolen from the *Knight of the Burning Peſtle*, and ſome *Drolls* written for Bartholomew Fair, conclude the works of ELKINAH SETTLE, playwright, critic, turncoat, ſhewman, city poet, and to cloſe his character, panegyriſt of Judge JEFFERIES.

DURFEY produced after the Revolution ſixteen

pieces of different deſcriptions, moſt of which were mutilated from other authors, or elſe a compound of their writings. It would be very unprofitable to follow them up with any cloſe remarks. *Love for Money*, which was ſtolen from ſeveral things, and from which COFFEY ſtole his *Boarding School Romps*, *Marriage Hater Matched*, remarkable for nothing but bringing DOGGET into public notice, whoſe admirable performance of a very bad part only kept it on its legs for ſix nights; *Cynthia and Endymion*, who Mr. DURFEY, by way of conſiſtency, makes Diana a ſtrumpet, and Syrens ſomething worſe. *Buſſy D'Amboiſe*, ſpoilt from *Chapman* and *Maſſaniello* from the *Rebellion of Naples*, make up a part of them, the reſt were known by the following titles, *Richmond Heireſs*, *Don Quixote*, three parts, *Intrigues of Verſailles*, *Campaigners*, The *Bath*, *Wonders in the Sun*, *Modern Prophets*, The *Old Mode and the New*, The *Two Queens of Brentford*, The *Grecian Hero*, and *Ariadne*. In ſhort every body liked DURFEY as a companion, and, therefore, wiſhed him to get a ſubſiſtence, and thus what his friends were obliged to deduct from the merit of the fact, they were glad to accord to the good nature of the man.

There are five plays to come which were written

by Crowne. *Darius*, 1688, The *Engliſh Friars*, 1690, *Regulus*, 1694, The *Married Beau*, 1694, *Caligula*, 1698, and *Juſtice Buſy*, which was not printed, nor can the date be acertained. None of theſe plays were equal either in the writing or ſucceſs to thoſe which went before them. Crowne's forte was by no means tragedy, and his ſubjects, being merely from remote hiſtory, and conducted upon the plan of *Seneca*, without the erudition or the diſcrimination of Jonson, no wonder they ſunk under their own burden. As for his comedies he ſhould have ſtopt at *Sir Courtly Nice*, for by this time the reformers got to work, and he among the reſt was forced iuto a vindication of his conduct, and an apology for the looſeneſs of his morals.

Banks brought out The *Innocent Uſurper* in 1694, and *Cyrus the Great* in 1696. Both of theſe plays were forbidden. The firſt under an idea that it reflected on government, and the other nobody knows why; but Banks, though an indifferent writer, had ſo peculiar a mode of introducing pathetic and touching ſituation, that the venal, the unprincipled, and the ambitious, got at length a knack of tingling at that imaginary rod which they fancied, while he depicted nature, he held up at them.

Banks wrote a very proper, but an unavailing vindication of himſelf in relation to the *Innocent Uſurper*, which is the ſtory of Lady Jane Gray, and which has more pathos, though it is not ſo well written, than Rowe's tragedy upon the ſame ſubject; but as for *Cyrus*, government ſeemed to take ſhame to itſelf for having been frightened at a ſhadow- for how ſo remote and ſo inapplicable a ſtory could affect them, unleſs upon the broad principle that all men in power are equally vulnerable on the ſcore of venality, it is not very eaſy to explain. The author, however, was ſtill unfortunate; for a ſhort time after it had been reſtored to the ſtage, the repreſentation of *Cyrus* died, ſince when the author withdrew him and his play from the public.

Two plays written by Mrs. Behn remain to be ſpoken of. Their titles are The *Widow Ranter*, and The *Younger Brother*. The firſt of theſe came out in 1690. It is a tragi-comedy, and a moſt incongruous buſineſs indeed. This is not, however, wonderful, for if what we have examined already, written in the prime of life, were ſo full of the eccentric, it is very unlikely that her mental faculties were grown ſtronger a year or two before her death at which time this piece was produced. Dryden, upon the production of this piece, furniſhed a prologue to it,

which. as BAYES ſays, might have ſerved for any other, for there is not a ſingle alluſion to the play from the beginning to the end.

The *Younger Brother*, though not produced till after Mrs. BEHN's death, does not labour under the ſame predicament, for ſhe took uncommon pains with it, and had been ten years preparing it for the ſtage. It had however very little ſucceſs, the literary atmoſphere was now purifying very faſt, and therefore became unable to ſuſtain thoſe groſs bodies that had been accuſtomed to float in it; and, as Mrs. BEHN was one of the projectors that ſported theſe ſulphurious balloons, no wonder that ſhe, the very *Roſieri de Pilatre* of the tribe, ſhould experience a chute *.

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* Having ſpoken in unqualified terms on the ſubject of Mrs. BEHN, I may perhaps be blamed, by thoſe who think it ſqueamiſh to deviate in opinion from the bold, naked, ſemine virtue, which was practicable in SPARTA, and which Mrs. WOOLSTONCROFT would have made us believe ought to be practicable in ENGLAND; to which I ſhall anſwer, reſerving to myſelf ſome exceptions that literature would have gained ſomething and domeſtic happineſs a great deal, had fewer ladies invented epithets and fondly fancied they had written poetry. As to Mrs. BEHN, I ſhall wind up her character with a parady written by a friend of mine.

> Farewell APHRA, and from thy ſhameleſs end
> May females fair from poetry be warned.

Three plays were written by RAVENSCROFT, after the Revolution, under the titles of The *Canterbury Gueſts*, which had no ſucceſs; The *Anatomiſt*, a poor attempt at a play, but which by turning the Doctor into a Frenchman was played firſt at a benefit, and afterwards occaſionally on account of ſome whim entirely owing to the perſon who altered it, probably an actor. and The *Italian Huſband*, a moſt ſhocking and revolting performance, conceived for no other purpoſe than to create unneceſſary terror, without a point, a drift, or tolerable writing to ſupport it, or indeed without tranſparent bloody hands, painted fire, or any of thoſe embelliſhments which have ſo frequently filled large houſes to the great terror of children at Chriſtmas, pregnant women, and the conſumption of hartſhorn and ſal volatile. This ſubject was taken up in 1754, in a way ten times more terrific by WILLIAM LEWIS. The particulars will come in their place, and now having ſo far cleared my way nothing remains to prevent my finiſhing my examination of the productions of DRYDEN.

Had thy licentious pen but ſtirred in virtue
With half the induſtry it raked in vice,
How would thy comedies have graced the theatre.
But as it is; what pages thou haſt blotted.

CHAP. VI.

DRYDEN RESUMED.

As the moſt diſgracious part of examining DRYDEN relates to his plays and the controverſies that ſprung from them, let us get over thoſe that we may have the gratification of according him more fully that tribute of praiſe and admiraton which as a poet are eminently due to his wonderful and extraordinary talents.

Don Sebaſtian, performed in 1690, is by ſome eſteemed DRYDEN's beſt play; whence however this judgment has ariſen cannot be eaſily conceived; for, though there is ſome fine, ſpirited, and poetic writing in it, there is alſo ſo much incongruity and extraneouſneſs that, for conduct, ſurely it is certainly one of the worſt. In the firſt place it is admitted that it is ſo long that it cannot be acted all at once, and what ſort of praiſe muſt that writer intend who ſubſcribes at the ſame time to the excellence of

this play, and insists that there are comic scenes relative to the distresses of princes and the vissitudes of empires which that age did not commend, and this would not indure. It is in fact what DRYDEN's plays generally are; it contains writing which might add lustre to a great author, and conduct that might disgrace an indifferent one.

Amphitrion next came forward; it was performed in 1691. The reader knows the play, that it is a mixture of PLAUTUS and MOLIERE, and that it has great merit; but the merit is entirely on the side of the writing, and even that is injurious to this production, considered as a dramatic piece, in proportion as it is beautiful and seducing. The whole conduct of it is so profligate and openly licentious, that though it has been often revived and embellished in various ways, its success has never answered the experiment. The universal report of it is that it is not a lady's play, and why, after so just a character of it has been given, has it ever been foisted on the public with all its sins upon its head. Jupiter's committing adultery and excusing it to Amphytrion by informing him that Hercules would be the issue of his intercourse with Alcmina, upon which Socia dryly remarks "that these gods know how to gild a bitter "pill," besides the peculiar glance it takes at a

moſt ſacred fact, is as profligate as the circumſtance of the pirate; who, after he had landed upon an iſland and robbed a church in the night, upon ſeeing a fair breeze ſprung up, to cover his eſcape, "See," ſaid he to the crew, "how the gods favour "ſacrilege."

In this play, though in the provokingly laughable humour of Socia, DRYDEN has falſified his own ſentiments of himſelf, for it proves that he was a judge of whatever was truly comic, and though there is ſome of the ſweeteſt writing that can be imagined, its whole tendency is immoral and irreligious. Jupiter congratulates himſelf on his meditated conqueſt on Alcmena, and praiſes the conſummate ſagacity which he had uſed in forming woman, which deſcribes her as every thing the reverſe of amiable, for he ſays he gave her two ſweet eyes to grant, and but one mouth to ſay nay; but let us have done with Amphytrion, a ſubject which has been treated ineffectually by eminent writers of all ages, and which proves, therefore, that it is not in human ability to make that perfect which is radically wrong.

Arthur was produced alſo in the year 1691. This piece, and the beautiful muſic of PURCELL that embelliſhes it, are ſo perfectly in every body's

recollection that it will be very little neceſſary to dwell on it. The piece itſelf is extravagant, but it is a maſque, and in it DRYDEN has had many opportunities to diſplay his abilities as a lyric poet, ſtyle in which he ever ſo eminently excelled. It cannot, therefore, be ranked as the meaneſt of his dramatic works; and, when we add the captivating melodies of PURCELL, it exhibits a very ſtrong claim to public admiration, for nothing has, perhaps, more univerſally excelled, or will be longer admired than *Lovely Iſle*, *I call all you to Woden's Hall*, *Come if you dare*, *To Arms*, and *Britons Strike Home*.

Cleomenes. This tragedy, which appeared in 1692, has, like the reſt of DRYDEN's works, ſome remarkable fine paſſages. It was decried in ſuch a way as evinced a foreneſs about his enemies which was equal to a tacit confeſſion of its merit. This warmth of invective againſt it was particularly noticeable at court, which induced many box loungers to ſneer at the piece and its author. The *Guardian* relates that, as DRYDEN came one night from the repreſentation of *Cleomenes*, he was accoſted by ſome young fop of faſhion with theſe words, "Had I been left alone with a young beauty, "I would not have ſpent my time like your Spar-

" tan." " That ſir is true, perhaps," ſaid DRYDEN ; " but give me leave to tell you, you are no " hero !"

Love Triumphant, the laſt of DRYDEN's dramatic pieces, has great merit, but it is only in places. On the whole, by the author's own confeſſion, it is defective. It ſhould ſeem as if DRYDEN, having ſet it down as an axiom that the ſtage was not his talent, took it altogether for granted, and therefore did not puſh his merit as far as it would go ; for it cannot be, had he taken ſufficient pains to have weeded his plays of thoſe groſs improprieties which he calls his ſhame, but his dramatic fame would have ſtood upon much higher ground. *All for Love*, and The *Spaniſh Friar*, in their way, rank very forward indeed, and manifeſt extraordinary proofs of tranſcendant merit. The apology for DRYDEN has conſtantly been that he undertook to bring out four plays in a year; CIBBER, however, ſays two, and even this is more than the fact ; for, upon an examination of the dates, we ſhall find that twenty-ſeven plays were performed in thirty years, and though he worked very hard in 1672, and 1673, except in two inſtances, he brought out no more than one play in any other given year.

This certainly, conſidering his other purſuits,

was more than enough; and, when we add that what a man does for mere bread, eſpecially if he has not an opinion of his talents for that ſort of work, comes not from the mind with ſuch willingneſs nor ſuch ability as other efforts, the children of inclination, the wonder will be not how he wrote ſo ill but how he wrote ſo much; and, if we did not eſtimate the matter in this way, how completely DRYDEN's merit would kick the beam weighed againſt SHAKESPEAR, who certainly produced in twenty-five years thirty-ſeven plays, out of which The *Comedy of Errors*, *Hamlet*, and *King John*, were written in a year ſo were The *Midſummer Nights Dream*, and *Romeo and Juliet*, *Much Ado about Nothiug*, and *As you Like It*; and with the difference of a ſhort interval *Lear*, *Macbeth*, and The *Taming of the Shrew*. Whenever we conſider this, and alſo conſider what plays they were, it is ridiculous to reſt DRYDEN's defence on the mere plea of time. We ſhall preſently be able to find a much better; in the interim we will take leave of his plays obſerving that the worſt of them has more of the true merit of a great and extraordinary writer, than the beſt of the major part of his cotemporaries.

Before I look a little into the other works of DRYDEN, which I lament that I muſt do in a very

curſory way, it may not be amiſs to ſee how far his plays improved his fortune, in which enquiry we ſhall have the mortification to find that they did not relieve him from that that of exigency and dependence of which he always complains, and from which he never was free. He had but one night at any time for a play, though SOUTHERN ſhortly after him had two, and ROWE ſoon after him had three; and as it has been calculated that play, dedication, and copy did not yield him upon an average more than a hundred pounds, what a ſlender income he muſt have depended upon to have lived like a gentleman and have maintained a family, for his poems, in proportion, muſt have been as unproductive, eſpecially if he wrote them all upon the ſame terms; for we find a document which proves that he ſold ten thouſand verſes to TONSON the bookſeller for two hundred and fifty guineas, about the twentieth of what POPE received for the ſame number of lines in his tranſlation of the *Iliad*.

To go into the ſubject of DRYDEN's poems at any length would be here particularly obtruſive; a circumſtance, perhaps, at which I ought to rejoice, becauſe of the difficulty in doing juſtice to writings of ſuch ineſtimable value. His original poetry was

often occaſional, and, therefore, unfortunately like his dedications, too full of that literal fiction, which, as we have ſeen in the caſe of WALLER, is not the true province of poetry. To congratulate a monarch on his reſtoration to his honours, and his native country, or a nation on the birth of a prince, may fill a poet's mind with every becoming kind of fervour, but the impoſſibility of conducting ſuch ſubjects, except through the medium of hyperbole and exaggeration, is evident, and ſuch addreſſes, therefore become little more than dedications in verſe.

Other ſubjects however, though occaſional, were more general, and in theſe the poet has had a wider field to expatiate in. To prophecy how a king will govern, or what will be the endowments of a young prince, is an effort attended with difficulty and hazard; but to dwell on the valour of generals who have nobly fought, and have been loudly applauded, as the deliverers of their country, is grateful, worthy, and patriotic, and, therefore, the *Annus Mirabilis* has every thing to exalt and nothing to humilate the poet, while the *Aſtræa Redux* and the *Britannia Rediviva* ſtamp on the beauty of poetry the bluſh of venality, and loſe the writer in the *Hyperboliſt*.

Abſalom and Achitophel, and The *Hind and the*

Panther, are occaſional in another way. One is national, the other religious, and may be both termed Satires. Theſe ſubjects were very warm in his mind, and ſeem to be written with great honeſty, and an unſhackled independence. The firſt is aimed at the faction, which through Lord SHAFTESBURY attempted to place the crown on the head of the Duke of MONMOUTH, and the other is a defence of the religion which he appears to have embraced from principle. Taken as a poem, the firſt has infinitely the preference; the alluſions have no violence, no incongruity, no inconſiſtency, the ſatire is ſtrong, but it is manly, and the cauſe is becoming and meritorious. In the other the vehicle, which, if the ſubject were rendered alluſively, would, perhaps, well bear out the author, defeats its own end. The *Hind and Panther* might have been figuratively religious bigots, and in that quality maintained their own tenets, which would have afforded inſtruction with great propriety through the medium of allegory; but, when beaſts are made to ſpeak of our Saviour and his apoſtles the ſcripture, St. Paul, the Pope, Luther Jehu and Zuinglius, the ſpotted Panther inſtantly aſſumes a gown and caſſock, and the milk white hind ſhelters herſelf behind a friar's cowl. Take the firſt of theſe productions, however, as poetry, and the other as poetical writing, it is ex-

tremely difficult to say which contains superior beauty, or where again, in this language such beauty can be found.

In the *Medal*, and *Religio Laici*, the same subjects are followed up, but with different success; for the *Medal* is inferior to *Absalom and Achitophel*, to which it seems intended as the superstructure, and *Religio Laici* is superior to the *Hind and Panther*, having more subject, and better foundation.

The *Heroic Stanzas on the death of Oliver Cromwell*, The *Poem on the death of Charles the Second*, which was less happy, The *Satire on the Dutch*, *and Mac Flecknoe*, are also among his occasional writings. In all these he has shewn a great deal of poetical dexterity, and, upon the same principle that he pursued in his prefaces and dedications, he has lavished pointed satire, or warm praise, with a strength and a diversity only known to his mind, and performed by his pen. It is but too true that the satire was often invective, and the praise adulation; the two subjects of all others most repugnant to liberality, and independence of spirit; yet in this, as well as in many other things, the writer seems to have prevailed over the man, as if there was no task, however revolting and ungrateful, but great talents and great ability

would render creditable and advantageous, though the motives of theſe productions, and the ſentiments they contain are an injury to the private character of DRYDEN, they add a ſtrength and a ſplendor to his public reputation.

The principal original works of DRYDEN are, The *Epiſtles*, The *Prologues and Epilogues*, The *Songs, Elegies, and Epitaphs*, The *Secular Maſque*, The *Ode on St. Cecelia's Day*, and *Alexander's Feaſt*. Theſe are all ſweetly poetical, and in them the mind ſeems to have been more at home; and, though they may ſome of them be conſidered as occaſional, yet they were choſen, not enjoined, and therefore they are more effuſion than employment. Many of the epiſtles ſhew that he had panegyric at will for his friends as well as for his patrons, and that, however neceſſity might have induced him occaſionally to flatter, inclination ballanced the account by giving him opportunity to be juſt. His epiſtles and his elegies therefore ſeem not to have more beauty than ſincerity, and as to his prologues, and epilogues, all the world muſt agree with CONGREVE, that if he had written nothing elſe they would have entitled him to the praiſe of excellence in its kind.

The *Secular Maſque* is a trifle, but it is a beau-

tiful one. The ſong alone of *With Horns and with Hounds*, which BOYCE has ſo deliciouſly ſet, is the eſſence of lyric poetry contained in eight lines. The *Ode on St. Cecelia's Day*, is an exquiſite poem and wonderfully well adapted for muſic. The deſcription of the different inſtruments, which the poetry commands to be predominant, is a beautiful outline for the compoſer, which, however, HANDEL knew not how to take advantage of, whoſe muſic every where manifeſts that he had but little taſte for the charms of poetry, and therefore this exquiſite production has never been ſeen in a dreſs adequate to its beauty.

As for *Alexander's Feaſt*, it will be the leſs requiſite to expatiate on its excellence ſince all the world feels, and all the critics allow, which is a miraculous conjunction, that it ſtands without a rival, to which has been added that, if it is excelled in parts, thoſe parts are only to be found in the works of DRYDEN. I muſt again lament that ſuch a poet fell into the hands of ſuch a muſician. This, however, is not the place, nor am I yet ripe for my obſervaitons on HANDEL; they will come better hereafter. One author calling this poem DRYDEN's wonderful Ode, ſays that it is worth all that PIN-

DAR has written, as a large diamond is worth a vaſt heap of gold, but I muſt not indulge myſelf with enumerating the univerſal praiſe that has been beſtowed on this effort of inſpiration, which has been extolled by friends and enemies Even POPE, "tremblingly alive all o'er," is conſtrained to ſqueeze out the truth, which he has done in his Eſſay on Criticiſm, ending with the imperfect line;

And what TIMOTHEUS was is DRYDEN now.

The tranſlations and paraphraſes of DRYDEN, as the world knows, are numerous and valuable, but it muſt be deplored that great natural talents, and ſtrong inventive faculties ſhould be employed on ſuch drudgery, which, according to the admitted criterion of what tranſlation ought to be, is a fitter taſk for ſome moping pedant in a college; for we are told that no tranſlation can be perfect unleſs the author is rendered line by line "A tranſlator," ſays doctor JOHNSON, "is to be like his author; it is "not his buſineſs to excel him." This was a ſervility however that DRYDEN diſdained, for which he has been ridiculed by MILBOURNE, and other critics, and thanked by all men of liberality of ſentiment, for he was the firſt that came at the ſoul of the poet and made him write in Engliſh, preſerving all the

beauty and only exchanging the language, but with all this the world would have been more gratified if inſtead of tranſlating the epic poetry of VIRGIL, he had given us an epic poem of his own, which he emditated, and which would, of courſe, have been a noble ornament of Engliſh literature *.

Juvenal, and *Perſius*, were clearly jobs for hire; and, though the hand of a maſter is every where diſcernable, yet for the reputation of ſuch a a poet as DRYDEN it were almoſt to be wiſhed they had all gone under names of his ſons, whom upon this occaſion he uſhered into public notice, and who certainly tranſlated ſome of the ſatires of Juvenal. This was not the caſe, however in relation to Virgil, for, without DRYDEN's Verſion of him, ENGLAND would never, perhaps, properly have known that

* The ſubject on which DRYDEN intended to have written an epic poem was neither ARTHUR, or EDWARD the Black Prince The agency he intended to uſe in the conſtruction of this poem, a circumſtance which he conſidered as indiſpenſibly neceſſity, was the interference of the Guardian Angels of kingdoms, which tradition had warranted a belief of, and which might be uſed without aſſiſtance from mythology or injury to religion. Nothing could be ſo grateful to the mind as this medium. DRYDEN imparted his deſign to Lord DORSET, in his dedication of one of the Books of Juvenal, and he charged BLACKMORE with ſtealing the plan, only ſays he, "The "Guardian Angels of Kingdoms were machines too ponderous for "him to manage."

elegant poet; but the world's admiration has ſuperſeded the neceſſity or the poſſibility of any thing that can be ſaid new in praiſe of this elaborate and truly valuable work.

One thing is moſt obviouſly in favour of DRYDEN in this undertaking. VIRGIL muſt be of all authors the moſt difficult to tranſlate, becauſe his chief, nay, it is almoſt generally allowed, his only merit conſiſts of his ſtyle, and nothing can be ſo hard as to convey mere ſtyle from language to language. This taſk was not properly ſpeaking congenial to the mind of DRYDEN. His talents came more in contact with thoſe of HOMER. They were heaven born, and full of great and intuitive beauty, rather than the beauty of meaſured grace and ſtudied refinement. POPE ſaid that if DRYDEN had lived to have finiſhed Homer he would not have attempted it after him, which argued great wiſdom in him; but, had they changed hands, had DRYDEN completed Homer, and left Virgil to POPE, at leaſt the Eneid, each of theſe writers would have been more at home. In a word, to tranſlate Homer requires a great poet, while Virgil may be rendered by a good verſifier. DRYDEN's having, therefore, ſo greatly ſucceeded as to produce a Virgil, which POPE honeſtly declares to be the moſt noble and ſpirited

tranſlation in any language, muſt have ſhewn that, great as his genius was, his judgement did not lag behind it.

His *Fables*, as they are called, which were his tranſlations, imitations, and paraphraſes from OVID, BOCCACE, CHAUCER, and others, were his laſt work, and from their novelty, for they were the firſt attempt to render a ſtyle of writing familiar in ENGLAND that had made up the beauty of Italian literature, they were greatly and deſervedly admired at firſt, which admiration, upon frequent repetition, grew into fame. We will here then leave DRYDEN as a poet. To enumerate all his merits would be as difficult as it is unneceſſary. Every man of real taſte cannot be without feeling their force. Let us therefore, while envious critics ſnarl and cavil at ſcarce faults, difficulty ſelected from crouded beauties, and idly diſpute whether his incomparable Ode be lyric or dithyrambic, feel its charms and rejoice that it is poetry, and that it emanated from the mind of man who, "except ſome human errors," as POPE has it, enlightened and adorned the Engliſh nation.

The works of DRYDEN, in proſe, are his Dedications, and Prefaces, his Controverſal Writings, the Lives of Plutarch, Lucian, Polybuis, and other

things; his Dialogue on the Drama, and his Tranſlation of du Freſnoy's art of Painting. Theſe, for what they are, fell in no reſpect ſhort of his other productions. They are are ſtrong, full, varied, clear, and deciſive. He was every where a conſummate critic, and cabable of abiding by the beſt teſt, for he could excel thoſe he criticiſed; but his general opinions are moſt to be relied on, not only becauſe they are diveſted of perſonality, but that they are correct and infallible, upon all which occaſions he is ſo eaſy, ſo unaffected, ſo natural; that, though he illuſtrates his ſubject by a thouſand images, he never entangles, or confuſes it.

This has, induced, the watchful critics to fancy that he was not very profoundly ſtored with erudition, but that from a quick preception, a large intercourſe with the world, a diſcriminating judgement, and an indefatigable perſeverence, he ſtudied the world inſtead of books, and made obſervation ſupply the place of learning. If ſo, it were devoutly to be wiſhed that they would graduate in the ſame ſchool; but, though this, in great meaſure, is the truth, it is not wholly ſo. Dryden had learning enough for any purpoſe, yet he had good ſenſe enough to deſpiſe pedantry, and genius enough to treaſure intellectual intelligence in preference to

mere ſchool doctrine; yet, upon a careful peruſal of his works altogether, it will be eaſily apparent to a diſcerning mind; that, though there have been men of more genius, and men of more learning, the equanimity with which theſe qualities in him corrected each other, the ſtore of ability he had to invent as well as to perfect, and the wonderful judgement with which he wrought barbarity into refinement, add a peculiar delight, and a valuable utility to literature, while they give his fame at once a luſtre and a novelty.

CHAP. V.

CONGREVE, VANBRUGH, FARQUHAR.

HAVING completed all that materially relates to dramatic writers, whose labours commenced before the Revolution, and continued for some time after it, and brought forward the stage to 1708, I shall now enumerate such plays as were produced up to that period, and remark on the most essential circumstances relative to their authors.

CONGREVE, about the place of whose birth, by his own connivance as it should appear, there has been as much contention as about HOMER's, as if it were material to posterity whether a man of talents was born in the wilds of YORKSHIRE, or the bogs of KILKENNY, was, let him have drawn his first breath where he might, a most charming English

writer*. He produced at the age of ſeventeen a Novel, called *Love and Duty Reconciled*, to which he prefixed an addreſs which has great good ſenſe, and poignant obſervation. Doctor JOHNSON ſays that for ſuch a time of life, it is uncommonly judicious; to which he curiouſly adds, "I would rather praiſe it than read it."

There is nothing particular in the life of CONGREVE except that, though a mere writer, and at that time, he contrived to get into places to the tune of twelve hundred a year, to which he added other conſiderable emoluments; that with all his merit he affected not to court fame; that he was affronted becauſe VOLTAIRE came many miles to pay his reſpects to him as a man of talents; and that he left ten thouſand pounds to a ducheſs.

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* SOUTHERN ſeverely reproves CONGREVE for affecting to be aſhamed of his native place, which his biographers ſay was KILKENNY, though as he gave it out it was at BARDSA, near LEEDS in YORKSHIRE, but in this account he had been often found tripping. To this FARQUHAR is ſuppoſed to have alluded in the Stratagem, where Archer, being aſked by Foigard, by way of poſing him what ſchool they went to in IRELAND, "Why," ſays Archer, knowing he was throwing out a good bait, it was TIPPERARY, "Ah now "dare you are out," ſays Foigard, "by my ſoul 'twas KIL-"KENNY."

As to CONGREVE, as a writer, except having eſtabliſhed a criterion in theory for lyric poetry, which by the way had been eſtabliſhed in practiſe by DRYDEN, he has left nothing of any material conſequence but plays to be remembered by; but thoſe contain a ſpecies of wit ſo extraordinary, ſo ingenious, and ſo admirable, that they will ever be conſidered as a capital ornament to the Engliſh language. Their plots, however, are ſo intricate, the dialogue is ſo ill appropriated, and nature ſo little conſidered, that though all men of nice judgment and critical diſcernment muſt admire them, yet they never will be in general eſtimation. They are a ſtring of bon mots, an acted jeſt book; but ſuch bon mots, and ſuch jeſts—ſo neatly turned, ſo exquiſitely witty, ſo incomparably brilliant—that it is plain they were written with infinite pains; whereas, dialogue in comedy ſhould ſeem what might be eaſily ſpoken. No one, however, wiſhes CONGREVE had written in any other manner; for though his comedies prove that true nature—perhaps a little elevated—and ſtrict probability will ever go ſooneſt to the heart, yet an acquaintance with his plays, and a judicious determination to overlook theſe very pardonable defects, beget in time a reliſh for them, which thoſe of no other author can excite.

The *Old Batchelor*, CONGREVE's firſt play, was produced in 1693, at which time ſome ſay he was only nineteen, and others that he was twenty-one owing I ſuppoſe to the difficulty of aſcertaining where he was chriſtened. At either age it certainly may be conſidered as a wonderful performance. DRYDEN the moment he ſaw it pronounced it the beſt firſt attempt he had ever met with, and the world has long decided in favour of its merits. Dr. JOHNSON ſeems to wonder how ſuch a perfect reſemblance of the world and its manners could be drawn by ſuch a boy, and then goes into an elaborate argument to prove that this is very eaſily poſſible; but it ſo happens that there is not ſo much truth in his argument as in his conjecture; for nothing can be a groſſer miſtake than that ſo much knowledge of human nature could have been gathered from books. The misfortune of this play is that it has too much wit, and this was ſo confirmed afterwards that, except *Love for Love*, none of this author's comedies received any thing like the applauſe due to their merit, as writings. They were too luſcious, too ſurfeiting; the beauties of their wit were too glaring, too aſtoniſhing, too replete, and the conception of its hearers was to ſtretch into admiration, that the pleaſure of tranquility were loſt in the effort, and thus at length the the dramatic reputation of CONGREVE died of a plethora.

The *Double Dealer*, which was performed the next year, had leſs ſucceſs, though its conduct is much better than that of the *Old Bachelor*. The reaſon is evident. CONGREVE's firſt attempt ſurprized rather than pleaſed, and by this time the ſurprize was gone off, for though he had toiled himſelf into wit his audience did not chuſe to toil themſelves into pleaſure, and, however admirably he had managed his bouts at altercation between his characters, they were tired of hearing almoſt inexplicable conduct explained through ſallies of wit and repartee, however brilliant.

Love for Love, performed, as we have ſeen, at the opening of BETTERTON's theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields, had a different fate, becauſe the plot is leſs complex and more intereſting than either of the preceding plays; and it ſo happens that, though it repreſents nature in finery and trappings, yet in other reſpects it is correctly nature, and, though it is not very likely that CONGREVE had either DRYDEN, Lord SHAFTSBURY, or King WILLIAM in idea in his character of Foreſight, all of which has been inſinuated it was a fair object for his pen as well as many others in the piece. The teſt of its merit is that of all his productions it was beſt received at firſt and has continued longeſt a favourite with the public

Two years afterwards came out The *Mourning Bride*, a tragedy than which nothing can be conceived more ſtrange and unnatural, except as to the ground work of the ſtory, which is tender and affecting, and owing to this it has been very frequently repeated. It is ſtuffed in many places with ſuch rant and bombaſt as Lee would have writ in Bedlam, and bluſhed for when he came to his ſenſes. where are, however, ſome few flowers among all theſe weeds and brambles, and but few. The reſt of this piece is like his poetry in general, which is as overcharged with imagery as his comedies are with point, and if we try to conceive it, it is with an aching imagination, that may raiſe aſtoniſhment, but muſt deſtroy pleaſure.

The *Way of the World*, performed 1700, though perhaps the worthieſt of all his plays, was indifferently received, and he is ſaid to have quitted the ſtage upon this in diſguſt, but, as if thoſe who ſay ſo wiſhed to ſhew their want of conſiſtency, they tell themſelves that he brought out the year afterwards The *Judgment of Paris*, and, in 1707, when he was in the Haymarket, the aſſociate of Vanbrugh, his opera of *Semele*.

Every body knows, and every body admires

The *Way of the World.* Its playful ſallies, its brilliant turns, its epigramatic points, will be the theme of praiſe as long as wit ſhall be the ſubject of admiration; but people don't give orders to their ſervants, or talk about their common affairs in bon mots and epigrams, or if one or two ſuch characters could be found, and it would be proper to exhibit him for the ſake of originality, why are all the characters to be witty alike? Why is the author always to be on the ſtage and to utter all the ſallies of his brilliant imagination by the mouths of others, who, to make a dramatic repreſentation perfect, ought to be permitted to ſpeak for themſelves? beſides the cunning of writing for the ſtage is that the dialogue, however witty, ſhould appear as if it had never been written at all, whereas in CONGREVE it is plain to be ſeen that every thing has not only been written but written with effort*. But let us not cavil at

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* I cannot here reſiſt an inlination to mention a thing that the celebrated BUTLER wrote, by way of ridiculing this ſtyle of witty dialogue, which was levelled at ETHERIDGE and others, and may here be applied to CONGREVE. It is a dialogue between CAT and PUSS on the roof of a houſe. Tom darts upon his prey and the Lady thus reproves him:

CAT. Forbear foul raviſher this rude addreſs;
Canſt thou at once both injure and careſs?
PUSS. Thou haſt bewitched me with thy powerful charms,
And I by drawing blood would cure my harms,

CONGREVE beacuſe his plays do not generally

CAT. He that doth love would ſet his heart a tilt.
Ere one drop of his lady's ſhould be ſpilt.
PUSS. Your wounds are but without, and mine within;
You wound my heart and I but prick your ſkin;
And, while your eyes pierce deeper than my claws,
You blame th' effect of which you are the cauſe.
I hurt to love, but do not love to hurt,
CAT. That's worſe than making cruelty a ſport.
PUSS. Pain is more dear than pleaſure when 'tis paſt,
CAT. But grows intolerable if it laſt.
PUSS. At once I'm happy, and unhappy too,
In being pleaſed, and in diſpleaſing you,
CAT. Prepoſterous way of pleaſure and of love,
That contrary to its own ends would move;
'Tis rather hate that covets to deſtroy;
Love's buſineſs is to love and to enjoy.
PUSS. Enjoying and deſtroying are all one,
As flames deſtroy that which they feed upon.
CAT. Force is a rugged way of making love,
PUSS. What you like beſt you always diſapprove:
CAT. He that will wrong his love will not be nice,
To excuſe the wrong he does, to wrong her twice.
PUSS. Nothing is wrong but that which is ill meant;
CAT. Wounds are ill cured with merely good intent.
PUSS. When you miſtake that for an injury
I never meant, you do the wrong, not I.
But, while you ſtifle and inflame deſire,
You burn and ſtarve me in the ſelf-ſame fire.
CAT. It is not I, but you, that do the hurt,
Who wound yourſelf and then accuſe me firſt;
As thieves, that rob themſelves, 'twixt ſun and ſun,
Make others pay for what themſelves have done.

pleaſe; let it rather move our admiration even to wonder that ſo young a man ſhould find ſuch a mine in himſelf as to be able in five years to dig out ſuch a cluſter of brilliants, and ſuch brilliants, that whatever labour it may have coſt him to get at them, they will be ever a moſt ſplendid ornament to the literature of that country they adorn.

VANBRUGH, though his abilities were confeſſedly inferior to thoſe of CONGREVE, took, however as ſurer way to ſucceed. He exhibited manners as as they are; and, left the complicate plots which had been accuſtomed to ſurprize inſtead of pleaſe Engliſh ſpectators, ſhould preclude his ſucceſs as it had the ſucceſs of CONGREVE, he ſimplified his by a cloſe attention to the mode of fabricating French plays. MOLIERE and DANCOURT furniſhed him with an inexhauſtible ſource of materials, and it muſt be confeſſed he made a notable uſe of them. It cannot be ſaid, however, that he ſervilely copied them for his own mode of writing though it had little nerve, for dialogue in light comedy, was unaffecting and eaſy, and he had a happy facility of making his characters ſpeak correctly in nature though he kept them to a ſituation ſufficiently elevated to anſwer all the purpoſes of an author of reputation, I remember it was remarked by the actors,

when I was a member of the theatre, that it was eaſier to ſtudy VANBRUGH than any man who had ever written.

VANBRUGH, like CONGREVE, got into favour and grew opulent, but this may be attributed more to his reputation as an architect than as an author, not that his buildings in ſtone and brick were made of ſuch durable materials as thoſe fabricks he raiſed upon paper; for, coming after INIGO JONES and CHRISTOPHER WREN, if any thing were to be ſaid of his fame it would be reverſe of what has been already quoted of AUGUSTUS. He was, however, highly thought of on this account by the great to the material benefit of his fortune and their immortal ridicule. His plays were produced in the following order:

The *Relapſe*, performed in 1697. This play is completely a ſequel to CIBBER's comedy of *Love's Laſt Shift, or the Fool in Faſhion*, in which that great obſerver, if not upon public characters, upon public writers, formed a moſt admirable number of ſtriking effects from the materials of former authors, and with a laudable art and judgment managed ſo that his play might ſuit his acting; but he has ſtill a higher claim to commendation. He was beginning

with great diſcernment and good ſenſe, to reform the ſtage without riſking the danger of appearing an innovator; for nothing can be more moral than the cataſtrophe of *Love's Laſt Shift*, yet ETHERIDGE, and other diſſolute writers furniſhed the materials; but, though I ſhall hereafter have plenty of opportunity to examine this, I conceived it neceſſary to ſay ſo much at preſent as there would have been an awkwardneſs in examining a ſequel without noticing ſomething of the ſubject on which it was founded.

If CIBBER in his play endeavoured to faſhion the ſtage into ſomething like decency, VANBRUGH ſeemed determined to kick down the foundation of this trembling fabric; for nothing can be more licentious than the *Relapſe*. CIBBER brings a man to reaſon, to happineſs, and his family; but VANBRUGH thinks it a ſcandal to polite manners to leave him there, and therefore undoes all the praiſeworthy work for which the other claims ſo laudably to be commended; as if it was a diſgrace to a man of the world to be honourable. There is, however a wonderful ſucceſſion of pleaſantry and neatneſs in this play, but ſo much the worſe, for witticiſm is an argument in favour of vice and immorality.

The *Provoked Wife*, performed in 1697, is an-

other play of the ſame licentious caſt; but it abounds in ſuch pleaſantry and is ſo full of natural and irreſiſtible humour that to this moment, whenever there has been an actor capable of ſuſtaining the character of Sir John Brute, the public have unaccountably conſented to overlook the ſhameful and ſcandalous conduct of Lady Brute, who not only ſeems delighted that her huſband ſhould give her a wordly reaſon for making him a cuckold, which ought to have been beyond the reach of all provocation, but is a commode and pliant inſtrument to the ſeduction of her niece. There are many other glaring objections to this play even now; but, as it ſtood originally, it was indeed moſt ſhockingly revolting, particularly the ſcene where Sir John Brute diſguiſed himſelf like a clergyman the better to beat the watch and bam the juſtice of peace, which ſcene VOLTAIRE with his uſual want of candour gives as a pattern of Engliſh comedy. As, however, we have had no Sir John Brute ſince GARRICK convulſed the audience with his incomparable performance of that part, it has reſted ever ſince in perfect tranquility, and I think it is very probable that it is now in its laſt ſleep *.

* This play, and *Love for Love*, COLLIER moſt ſeverely cenſured in his Strictures on the Stage, not with equal propriety by the by, for though it has been ſaid, and I am afraid too truly, that what-

Æſop performed in 1697. This comedy was made into two; why it is impoſſible to tell, for it was ill enough received when it firſt appeared. It is completely formed on BOURSAULT's two plays, the merits of which we have examined, and if we have ſeen that a perpetual repetition of the fables, however excellent, tired a French audience at the time declamation was the delight of that people, it is eaſy to conceive the reception it met with on

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ever wit CONGREVE might have had in his writings he had little virtue, yet there is leſs of that open unpardonable profligacy than there is in VANBRUGH, and this is proved by COLLIER's being obliged to ſtrain points whenever he came to reprobate CONGREVE, whereas his reprobation was too obvious and too merited when he ſought for opportunities in VANBRUGH. Speaking of *Love for Love*, he inſtances two ſpeeches as a ridicule of the ſcripture, which conſtruction they certainly will not bear. Says Sir Sampſon Legend, "Sampſon is a good name; your Sampſons were ſtrong dogs from "the beginning." "Very true," anſwers Angelica, "but if you "recollect, the ſtrongeſt of that name pulled an old houſe over his "head." "Here," ſays COLLIER, "you have the ſcripture burleſqued and Sampſon once more brought into the houſe of Dagon "to make ſport for the Philiſtines." Is this any thing like truth? Not at all. Angelica cannot help laughing at the idea that an old man ſhould have the courage to undertake a young wife and by this obvious remark, ſo far from ridiculing the ſcripture, ſhe only laughs at Sir Sampſon, who ever thinks a man irreligious, who ſays "he is "as poor, or as patient as Job." Mr. COLLIER is more ſupportable when he reprobates VANBRUGH for irreligion in introducing a rake who aſſumes the character of a clergyman, and who gets drunk and bullies the watch.

the Engliſh ſtage, eſpecially as it was according to cuſtom crammed with licentiouſneſs.

The *Pilgrim*, 1700, was an alteration of BEAUMONT and FLETCHER's play, but though brought forward with DRYDEN's *Secular Maſque*, and a Prologue and Epilogue alſo by him, which, however, neither mentions the play nor the occaſion of its revival, it had but little ſucceſs. The *Falſe Friend* 1702. This comedy is ſaid to have had ſucceſs, but it does not ſeem to have kept the ſtage, and indeed it has very little to recommend it.

The *Confederacy*, 1705, is a comedy of another ſtamp; it is built on an excellent ground work, and though full of intrigue is leſs exceptionable on the ſcore of indelicacy than any of this authors productions. I conſider it very nearly as a perfect comedy, and for this I ſhould give my reaſons were it not that it would be only repeating the public deciſion, which has clearly proved that it never has ceaſed, and probably never will ceaſe to be a popular favourite.

The *Miſtake* is a play of great merit. It was originally performed in 1706, and has been frequently revived. The quarrels of the lovers and their ſervants are in that way inimitable. It were

pity inſtead of keeping up the conſequence of meritorious writers by aſſiſting their productions with ſuitable alterations according to times and circumſtances, that plays of this value ſhould be cut down to farces; which, in this, the *Miſer*, and many other inſtances, have prevailed to the diſgrace of the theatre. Theſe plays, The *Cuckold in Conceit*, and *Squire Trelooby*, which are MOLIERE's *Cocu Imaginaire*, and *Monſieur Pourceaugnac*, make up the works of VANBRUGH, except The *Country Houſe*, which is almoſt verbatim from DANCOURT's *Maiſon de Campagne*, and The *Journey to London*, which was left unfiniſhed and afterwards made into The *Provoked Huſband* by CIBBER.

We now come to FARQUHAR, a man greatly eſteemed as a gentleman, and careſſed as a writer. He firſt went on the ſtage; but having the misfortune to wound a performer in a tragedy by uſing a ſword inſtead of a foil, he relinquiſhed that profeſſion. WILKS, however, who knew his talents, adviſed him to write for the ſtage, and in return FARQUHAR made his friend the hero of his pieces, which, however, he is ſaid to have drawn as portraits of himſelf, having got a commiſſion in the army, and being a young man greatly eſteemed by the gay world; young, volatile, and wild, but poliſhed, ſenſible, and honourable.

The exceſſive ſenſibility to which FARQUHAR was a ſacrifice impeded him perhaps from conſidering his writings ſo maturely as he ought to have done*; but there is yet enough in them to ſhew that

* Poor FARQUHAR, fearing the conſequences of poverty and dependence, gave out that he wiſhed to marry a woman of fortune. A lady who had fallen violently in love with him, but who had no fortune, paſſed herſelf upon him for a woman of conſiderable property. He, having too much honour to be ſcrupulous upon ſo delicate an occaſion, without examining rent rolls or title deeds, married her and was heartily chagrined at his diſappointment, without the power however of upbraiding her as the author of it who loved him tenderly, and made him, at leaſt in attention and ſolicitude, a moſt valuable wife. His next object was to take ſome other means of rendering himſelf and his family independent; for which purpoſe, by the advice of a nobleman in power, he ſold his commiſſion for a preſent ſupply under a promiſe that he ſhould be ſpeedily provided for, which was all he got from my Lord. His family encreaſed, and inſtead of being independent, he got every day more and more involved. This ſo completely conquered his mind that, unable to bear the poverty which he had always dreaded, and hurt to death to ſee an amiable wife, in whom he now delighted, and a growing family in want and diſtreſs, his wretchedneſs fixed upon him a lingering decline which finiſhed him before he was thirty. During his illneſs he wrote the *Beaux Stratagem*, and with an equanimity of temper which had never for a moment deſerted him, he predicted that he ſhould die before the run of it was over, which actually happened. Among his papers was found the following letter to his friend WILKS.

" Dear BOB,

" I have not any thing to leave thee, to perpetuate my memory, " but two helpleſs girls; look upon them ſometimes and think " of him who was to the laſt moment of his life, thine.

" G. FARQUHAR "

This truſt WILKS faithfully fulfilled by procuring benefits for

he had great requiſites as a dramatic writer, for his plots are ingenius and original, his characters are natural and unaffected, and his manners, though common and obvious, are never trite or vulgar. Thus his comedies always give rational pleaſure, but ſeldom excite ſtrong admiration; and there can be no doubt that if he had lived as independently as CONGREVE and VANBRUGH, and had not been cut off prematurely, he would have given more original proofs of his talents as a complete dramatic writer than either of thoſe authors; ſince in what he has left the management is more judicious, the nature more faithful, and the faults more venial.

FARQUHAR's firſt play was *Love and a Bottle.* It came out in 1699, at which time he was twenty-one. The ſtage at that time knew nothing but licentiouſneſs, and therefore he conſidered it as incumbent on him to draw ſuch a character as Roebuck; which after all is much better as to nature, force, and ſpirit than almoſt any thing that had then appeared, or, perhaps, that has appeared ſince. The ſucceſs of this play encouraged FARQUHAR to go on, and, in 1700, the Jubilee year, he produced The *Conſtant*

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his friend's family; but this did but little, for Mrs. FARQUHAR died not long after her huſband in indigent circumſtances, and his daughters, one of whom was alive in the year 1764, were obliged to ſubmit to drudgery for a maintenance.

Couple, which play had a run of fifty-three nights the firſt ſeaſon, and has had almoſt innumerable repetitions. This play is ſo well known that it is uſeleſs to ſay any thing here of its merits. The corroborated determination of the public is the teſt of truth which has ever been and muſt ever be in its favour.

Sir Harry Wildair is a ſequel to the *Conſtant Couple*, and, like ſequels in general, inferior to the original. Characters that are worked up ſhould be let alone. In theſe pieces the parts were admirably performed. It is ſaid that not even the ſmalleſt idea has been conveyed of Sir Harry Wildair ſince WILKS and NORRIS, ever after appearing in this play, was called *Jubilee Dicky*. The *Inconſtant* is a play of intrinſic merit. It appeared in 1702. The plot is very ſimilar to BEAUMONT and FLETCHER'S *Wild Gooſe Chaſe*, and the circumſtance of the treachery againſt Mirabel in the houſe of the Courtezan is ſaid really to have happened to FARQUHAR. The characters are admirably drawn, and of this piece it may be ſaid in common with many others, that whenever the theatre has found actors for the play, the play has always received applauſe from the public. The *Stage Coach*, produced in 1705, is a

pleaſant trifle, which was performed as a farce, and in which FARQUHAR was aſſiſted by MOLDEAUX.

The *Recruiting Officer* alſo came out in 1705, and it was written, as we are told, on the ſpot where its author laid the ſcene of action, who was himſelf at that time on a recruiting party, and therefore had an opportunity of painting his portraits from nature. In which taſk he has ſucceeded completely as the world will bear me teſtimony. For Captain Plume he is ſaid to have looked in the glaſs; and, in the reſt, at the perſons who ſurrounded him, Juſtice Ballance has been acknowledged for a character of worth and property who lived at that in time SHROPSHIRE, and, in gratitude for the hoſpitality he received from that gentleman and his friends, he dedicates his play to all friends round the Wrekin. This play is ſo well known that it is intruding to enlarge upon it, I ſhall therefore ſay that there will be a dearth not only of actors but of public taſte if it ever ſhould be excluded from the theatre.

The *Twin Rivals*, which is ſaid to be the beſt and moſt regular of all this author's works, was performed in 1706. This judgment appears to be fallacious, and though there are ſtrong traits of merit, perhaps taken in one ſenſe ſtronger than any thing in

FARQUHAR, yet you miſs a great deal of the negligent eaſe in which the mind is ſo fond of ſporting with this author. To detect villany and impoſition does not ſeem to be ſo much in his way as to reward honeſty and frankneſs. Teague is well drawn, ſo is Mrs. Midgnight, but it is almoſt cenſure to be obliged to praiſe in pencils; and, even if ARISTOTLE himſelf could upon theſe occaſions ſtep forward and do us the kindneſs to regulate our theatres for us, he would preach to little purpoſe againſt ſuch ſterling arguments as an applauding public and a well filled treaſury. At the ſame time let me remark that treaſuries may be filled, and audiences may applaud without the ſmalleſt worthy inducement, but I am now ſpeaking of plays, not puppet ſhews.

The *Stratagem* came out in 1707. When we conſider that this comedy was began and completed in ſix weeks, during which time the author lay as it were on his death bed, it is impoſſible to deny, had health and a longer life been permitted him, that FARQUHAR muſt have reaped very brilliant reputation as a dramatic writer. This play is a moſt pleaſing and intereſting repreſentation of human manners, and has that peculiar felicity in common with moſt of this author's works of contraſting the elegant and the ſimple with the common and the fa-

miliar, without injury to either; but as there is ſcarcely a theatre in the kingdom where various Archers, Scrubs, Bonifaces, and Cherries, have not fretted their hour, it would be only intruſion to remark any thing further on this ſprightly and entertaining comedy. I ſhall, therefore, cloſe this article by ſaying that theſe poets were a triumvirate that greatly ornamented the ſhort period in which they wrote; and that to examine them how you may, it will be difficult to know how to give a preference. CONGREVE went for wit, VANBRUGH for humour, and FARQUHAR for nature, not that there was an excluſion of nature from either of the others, but CONGREVE's nature was fine, elegant, diſtant, and ſelf important, you admired but had no inclination to approach; VANBRUGH's nature, which was gay, thoughtleſs, extravagant, and unworthy, you laughed at but could not approve; but the nature of FARQUHAR which you ſaw every day in life, and which rationally made up the moſt laudable of your relaxations, you naturally felt and cheriſhed.

CHAP. VII.

ROWE, STEELE, AND MRS. CENTLIVRE.

Of thoſe dramatic writers, at this period, whoſe labours were celebrated in their own time, and have reached with reputation to ours, Rowe Steele, Mrs. Centlivre, and Cibber, deſerve particular mention. Cibber, however, involving in his theatrical hiſtory a number of intereſts, and being remarkable as well for his management as his writing and acting, ſhall occupy the next chapter by himſelf; and, in the intermediate time, we will examine the others.

Rowe, whoſe dramatic reputation ſtands meritoriouſly high with but few of the great and ſplendid requiſites, was one of thoſe writers who went more for delight and inſtruction than elevation and aſtoniſhment; a ſpecies of merit that confers a great public obligation, ſince goodneſs, with all its beauty, is more captivating and dignified in the garb of unaffected truth than tricked out in all the frippery of

ſubtilty and ſophiſtry. In other words, the ſtage was deſigned for all auditors, and all auditors feel and underſtand ROWE; perhaps not ſo immediately as OTWAY, but the effect is more laſting, becauſe the ſentiment is not ſo alluring as impreſſive.

ROWE was, properly ſpeaking, a tragic writer, his attemps at comedy having been very weak and diſreputable. Like moſt maſters of their art, he took liberties with his ſubject, fancying, probably, that an Engliſh author had as good a right to ſuppoſe himſelf qualified for conſtructing a play as a Greek critic. This has now and then offended a few fatidious cavillers who have fallen foul of him for his frequent broaches of the unities; and it muſt be confeſſed that it had been better in ROWE, or even in SHAKESPEAR, if the ſcene of action had never been interrupted during the continuation of any one act, as this violation, as doctor JOHNSON very ſenſibly obſerves, is to add more acts to the play, every act being a portion of buſineſs tranſacted without interruption; and this, by the way, defines every play conſtructed by the rules of ARISTOTLE, to be a piece of one act; but let us examine his plays and we ſhall find that, however he might have been deficient in point of regularity as a dramatic writer, he well knew the more worthy

part of that occupation of conveying pleaſure and improvement.

The *Ambitious Stepmother* was brought forward in 1700. The ſtory is evidently taken from the eſtabliſhment of *Solomon on the Throne*, by BATHESHEBA, ZADACK the prieſt, and NATHAN the prophet, the particulars of which may be ſeen in the firſt Book of Kings. There is an originality and a ſtrength in the language of this play in places that ROWE never afterwards exceeded. The dialogue between Memon and Magas is deſervedly celebrated. It ſerved for the ground work of *Tamerlane and Bajazet*, but boaſts conſiderable ſuperiority, as it is more natural and unaffected, and therefore more ſolid and convincing. GARRICK revived this play in 1758, but it had not the ſucceſs he expected.

Tamerlane, originally performed in 1702, is a tragedy more univerſally known and celebrated by its having been written to ſerve a temporary and popular purpoſe than by any ſuperiority it has a right to claim over the other plays of ROWE. All that's moral and amiable is thrown into the character of Tamerlane, who is the repreſentative of King WILLIAM, all that is tyrannic and deteſtible is given

to Bajazet, who fits for Louis the fourteenth; but the flattery is so grofs, and the flander so malignant, that compliment is loft in adulation, and severity is blunted by the want of candour, like the white and the black spirit in an Oriental Tale; one so permits all the mischief, and the other is so unable to prevent the good, the hero is alternately happy and miserable through the story, and thus, by being no more obliged to his guardian angel than his tormentor, the purposes of morality are defeated.

The public have certainly upon popular grounds greatly admired this play; and, in favour of many admirable, moral and patriotic sentiments it contains, have passed over the whining egotism of Tamerlane, and the empty fury of Bajazet; but the critics with more sense and less spleen than their custom have marked it as a catching rather than a meritorious effort of genius, calculated to surprize the imagination, but incapable of penetrating the mind, and gratifying the understanding.

Taken as a historical fact, Rowe has been egregiously wrong; for Tamerlane, so far from possessing refined manners and transcendant virtues, is represented as a barbarous and mercileſs conqueror, and the only contention between him and Bajazet, upon

his principle, ought to have been who might ravage moſt countries and practiſe the horrors of war with all its deſolation to the moſt ſanguinary degree of perfection. It would in this point of view, have been more juſt to have imagined heroes and given them the qualities of WILLIAM, and LOUIS; but perhaps ROWE fancied the mode he took better policy, and that, when his play ſhould have loſt that part of its attraction which related to its reſemblance between the Engliſh and French monarchs, it might yet be received as a picture, whether true or falſe, of the wars of Tamerlane and Bajazet.

The *Fair Penitent*, brought out in 1703, is a tragedy of much more conſequence to the reputation of an author than *Tamerlane*. It exhibits a domeſtic calamity, and one of that particular kind which is not the leſs affecting for being but too frequent. It is ſo correctly in nature that if it has a fault it is that vice is repreſented in too alluring a garb in Lothario, and that Caliſta feels more anger than ſhame, more indignation from detection than compunction from guilt. This certainly injures the intereſt and weakens the moral.

There are more radical faults in it. The play

is finiſhed at the end of the fourth act, and the diſtreſs felt by the innocent is ſtronger than would naturally grow out of the compaſſion due to the guilty; but it is nevertheleſs a play of uncommon beauty and merit; and, as theſe diſcriminations are too nice for general criticiſm, the ſatisfaction the public receive from it is honourable to the author and creditable to themſelves. It is leſs neceſſary to expatiate on the great variety of admirable dramatic requiſites the *Fair Penitent* contains, as they are felt by every heart, and confirmed by every judgement.

The *Biter*, brought out in 1705, was Rowe's only attempt at comedy; for, when he found in ſpight of his own opinion of his piece, which went ſo far, as we are told, as to make him expoſe himſelf by ſitting in the houſe and laughing while the reſt of the audience were hiſſing and hooting, he had the good ſenſe, however he might find it laudable to ridicule biters, not to be bit afterwards himſelf by any perverſion of his talents *.

* This ridicule of biters, or queerers, or hoaxers, or whatever title under which they may be diſtinguiſhed, was certainly very fair and has been, from Addison's paper in the Spectator, to the preſent time, pretty ſucceſsfully attempted. The circumſtance of Rowe's laughing in the midſt of a groaning audience is ſomething like a matter that happened on the French ſtage. The author of a

Ulyſſes was performed in 1706, and is a tragedy, though it poſſeſſes much merit in the writing, not well calculated for general effect. There is ſo much of the air of fable in thoſe accounts handed down to us of ancient heroes, that ſubjects of this nature are better calculated for opera than for tragedy, or comedy. If we were to take from thoſe innumerable poetic beauties contained in the *Odyſſey*, only thoſe which are probable, the pieces would be too ſterile for effect; and, if we were to violate probability, as a regular dramatic production it would be inadmiſſable. *Ulyſſes*, therefore, has ever been conſidered as a hetrogeneous production, containing poetical merit, but not enough with all the attempts that have been made to revive it, to keep a fair ſtand on the ſtage.

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piece, that was highly diſapproved, had beſtowed orders very liberally among his friends to ſupport his rickety production. Seeing however that it was impoſſible to allow any ſhare of commendation to the piece, they, by degrees, all deſerted him except one; who, faithful to his promiſe, and yet open to conviction, was reduced at laſt to applaud and hiſs at the ſame time: "What is all this," ſaid a ſpectator, who ſat near him, "is it poſſible you can approve and "diſapprove at the ſame time?" "No, no," ſaid the other, "that's not the caſe. I know this play is the moſt execrable thing "that ever appeared before the public, but I came in with an order "and have a great regard for the author, and ſo, that I may neither "wrong him nor my own judgment, I have abuſed the piece out of "juſtice to myſelf till I am hoarſe, and clapt it to oblige him till "my hands are ſore."

The *Royal Convert*, a tragedy performed in 1708. This play has a conſiderable portion of ſterling merit, and is never performed but it excites that kind of ſolid praiſe which is highly honourable to the reputation of an author. There is, however, too much of the heavineſs of RACINE in it; too much turgidneſs; too much labour; and, as there is ſcarcely a paſſion it diſplays or incident it produces that had not been before ſucceſsfully treated and thrown into affecting ſituations, however it may ſoberly intereſt the mind, it is not well calculated to rouſe the feelings.

ROWE certainly had great expectations from this play, and attempted to catch at popularity by imitating, in his prediction of the bleſſings of the union, SHAKESPEAR's celebrated prophecy in *Henry the Eighth*, of the happy reign of ELIZABETH; but he injured the jet of this cataſtrophe by giving it a religious turn, and his prophecies were too well anticipated to leave him more than the gleanings of that reputation of which SHAKESPEAR reaped ſo fair a harveſt

Jane Shore, a tragedy well known and greatly admired, and very deſervedly, by every Engliſh auditor, was produced in 1713; and, though the

preſent account of dramatic productions is intended to extend as nearly as poſſible to 1708, as, except one play, it completes the career of ROWE, I ſhall notice it in this place.

With ſome inadmiſſible variations from the original ſtory, this play reſembles a well known hiſtorical fact, and one of that kind which muſt intereſt every heart. A penitent, even though an adultreſs, under very peculiar circumſtances may be forgiven, and never was forgiveneſs excited ſo laudably as here, but to exhibit a neceſſary and ſalutary warning, and to ſhew that a woman who has violated the marriage bed may not, according to the preſent faſhionable definition of dramatic moral, triumph, and be happy, the poet has made heaven divide the judgment by giving the clemency to the huſband and taking the juſtice to itſelf, and thus JANE SHORE receives pardon and dies.

This play, with all its merit, and all the hold it has taken of the public, has been the ſubject of perpetual criticiſm, and ſome of the ſtrictures of the different wits ſeem to have breathed more a ſpirit of envy than candour. POPE has been remarkably unfortunate. *Jane Shore*, we are told, was written in imitation of SHAKESPEAR, though I dont find the

author has admitted this, and POPE, in the Art of ſinking in Poetry, though he afterwards wrote ROWE's epitaph, has this remark, " I have ſeen a play, pro- " feſſedly written in the ſtyle of SHAKESPEAR, " wherein the reſemblance lay in one ſingle line,

" And ſo good *morrow t'ye* good maſter lieutenant."

Now it ſo happens that there is nothing like this in *Jane Shore*, the line alluded to being in *Lady Jane Grey*, but unfortunately for the quoter it is not correctly the ſame, being,

" And ſo good *morning* good maſter lieutenant *."

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* That every ſaddle may be placed on the right horſe, as this remark comes from the Art of Sinking in Poetry, it is two to one againſt its being POPE's, for, though it has always been given to him, SWIFT and ARBUTHNOT were partners with POPE in that production; but, now we talk of horſes, the fact itſelf has a reſemblance to a ſmall miſtake of the notorious Mr. ASTLEY. When they were getting up a new pantomime ſome time ago at Covent Garden theatre, it was in contemplation, among other objects intended to relieve camels, elephants, and rhinoceroſes, and calculated, as Mr. BAYES has it, to elevate and ſurprize, to introduce ſome horſes that had been taught, like platoon firing, to kneel, ſtoop, and ſtand. For this purpoſe an embaſſy was ſet on foot and the purport formally notified to the only manager in the world of that docile animal the horſe. When this great man had correctly underſtood the nature of the demand, after a variety of incongruous and unintelligible exclamations, occaſioned by his indignation leſt his horſes ſhould be diſgraced by appearing on the ſtage, he vociferated, " Here's your works!! Want

Other critics have complained that probability is grofsly violated in the breach of the unity of time, and it muſt be confeſſed that the ſtarving of JANE SHORE between the third and the fifth acts of the play is a ſtrange irreconcileable circumſtance; but we muſt take the brilliant with this flaw or we cannot have it at all, and it were pity to looſe that luſtre it really has by perpetually contemplating on a trifling defect. It has alſo been objected that there are many florid ſpeeches utterly inconſiſtent with the ſtate and ſituation of the diſtreſsful perſonages who ſpeak them, and this is ſaid to have been the continual practiſe of ROWE; but, to ſhew that they are not all agreed on the ſubject, one doctor ſays that "Alicia is a character of empty noiſe, with no "reſemblance to real ſorrow or natural to madneſs," another inſiſts, that "the interview between Jane "Shore and Alicia, in the fifth act, is very affecting, "and that the madneſs is well painted." It happens, however, fortunately for the reputation of ROWE, that this play of all others beſt derives its pretentions to favour from the criterion of public judgement, and it will conſtantly be found, when-

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"my horſes to manooeer upon Common Garden ſtage Why, "damme, 'tis *ſcandalous magneſia*. Sir, will Mr. HARRIS, lend "me Mrs. SIDDONS to ſing in my Amphitheatre?"

ever it is ably performed, to attract crouded houſes.

Having betrayed myſelf into an infringement of my plan, ſo far as to notice Jane Shore, I ſhall now wind up my account of Rowe by mentioning his only remaining dramatic production, *Lady Jane Grey*, which was performed in 1715, and was then received, and has often been repeated, with conſiderable ſucceſs.

Mr. Edmund Smith, a writer of reputation, and Banks furniſhed Rowe with ſome hints for the conſtruction of this play, but the Engliſh hiſtory and his own judgement with more, and it muſt be confeſſed there are many paſſages of extraordinary value to be found in it, particularly the ſcene of Guildford and Jane Grey in the third act, the reconciliation between Guildford and Pembroke, and the ſcene of Jane Grey before ſhe mounts the ſcaffold.

Indeed were this play to be judged according to the merit of its writing, its conſtruction, and its conduct, it is of equal excellence with any other of the tragedies of this author; but hiſtorical ſubjects have never been treated ſo ſucceſsfully as by

SHAKESPEAR, nor was it ROWE's forte ſo much to elevate as to intereſt, to pourtray public calamity as to paint private diſtreſs. Upon this ground has ROWE eſtabliſhed a reputation, highly honourable to himſelf, and greatly valuable to the intereſt of the theatre; and, in ſpight of the high authorities by which we are taught to believe, he has no merit but the elegance of his diction and the ſuavity of his verſe, that his characters are eaſily drawn, and eaſily acted, that he ſeldom moves either pity or terror, and that, though he delights the ear, he rarely pierces the breaſt, I appeal to the tears which are conſtantly ſhed at his tragedies, and to that conſequent criterion their continually holding a forward ſituation at the theatre, to contradict theſe aſſertions, and to ſhew that, as impreſſive as well as great actions are a forward, perhaps the beſt, drift of the ſtage, ſuch writers as ROWE and OTWAY, who, though they do not ſtep beyond the modeſty of nature in their writings, render that modeſty in its moſt lovely garb, have a claim to a moſt elevated rank as ſupporters and embelliſhers of the drama.

Though, according to my plan, I cannot take up STEELE now as fully as I have taken up ROWE, yet it is proper to ſpeak of that extraordinary man

in this place, whoſe ſtrange private conduct, and meritorious public ſentiments, were ſo continually at variance.

There is a noble manlineſs in independency of mind, and in every character who poſſeſſes it there muſt naturally be much virtue; but STEELE, who certainly had this quality, gave it a new turn; for his precepts and his practice were perpetually at variance; and, while his private conduct was tinctured with vice and profligacy, by way of a ſet off, he transferred all the virtue to his pen. This drew him very often into unpleaſant ſcrapes, for it was natural to believe thoſe ſentiments inſincere, to which his actions conſtantly gave the lie.

When he wrote the *Chriſtian Hero*, at which time he had gone into the army and cut himſelf off from the ſucceſſion of an eſtate merely to indulge in thoſe profligate propenſities which in that profeſſion he might do without reſtraint, he was of courſe ridiculed moſt triumphantly; but this, ſo far from altering him, only ſtimulated his mind to new exertions of the ſame extraordinary kind. He ſwore in company, and moralized upon paper, ſinned in the evening, and abſolved himſelf in the morning, and ſeemed as if he was determined intimately to know every

ſpecies of vice in order practically to ſhew his fellow creatures how hideous it was, and how carefully it ought to be avoided, and it muſt be averred of him that whatever were his follies, he never proſtituted his pen for the purpoſes of venality, or adulation.

As the hiſtory of STEELE is involved in that of the theatre itſelf, I ſhall leave what I have to ſay of it till I relate how he came to be a patentee, and go into other circumſtances connected with that tranſaction. In the mean time, as his firſt three plays are within my preſent province, I ſhall look at their reſpective merits.

The *Funeral, or Grief A la Mode*, was originally performed in 1602, and is a comedy of very conſiderable merit. Indeed it has ſo many ſterling and original points that it has ſerved to ſupply materials for many imitators ſince, whoſe flimſey pretentions to public favour, without this auxiliary help, would have been conſidered as very ſlight indeed. Nothing can eſtabliſh a better proof of the admirable merit of this play, both as a work of real invention and of true genius, than the diligence with which the critics have attempted, to no purpoſe, to diſcover that it is not genuine; for the plot and the

ſtyle are unqueſtionably the author's own, and the laſt is ſo peculiar, which is, indeed the characteriſtic of STEELE's writings, that nothing can be more difficult to get by heart; but, when attached to the memory, nothing can be more eaſy to retain.

The outline of this play is incomparably fine, and the characters are full of variety; every thing is perfectly in nature, and the moral is complete. The beſt virtues are meritoriouſly rewarded, and the worſt vices juſtly puniſhed. The objects held up for imitation, and deteſtation, are generoſity, and hypocriſy, and theſe are recommended and decried as they branch into the circumſtances that call them into action, from Campley to Trim, from Lady Brumpton to the Undertaker. In ſhort there is more merit in this play than the world has been generally inclined to allow; and, though it is never performed without great applauſe, it has been more admired through thoſe mediums, one of them in particular, where, by the introduction of other incongruous circumſtances, more catching and leſs valuable, auditors have been cheated into admiration without the fatigue of thinking.

The *Tender Huſband*, brought out in 1705, is not ſo good a play as the *Funeral*, but it has many

beauties and much truth. ADDISON, who upon all occaſions manifeſted a warm anxiety to appear a kind of literary patron to STEELE, ſeems to have fondly wiſhed the world to have ſet down a principal part of the merit of this comedy to his aſſiſtance; but, to a reader of diſcernment, nothing can be more eaſy than to detect this palpable falſity. The ſtyle of the two writers is completely different, and I think there would be little difficulty in pointing out all the ſquared, cut, meaſured, and divided papers in the Spectator, written by ADDISON, even without the aſſiſtance of CLIO, whereas STEELE's ſtyle is ſtrong, and diverſified; it goes directly for nervous effect, without the ſmalleſt appearance of fiſhing for praiſe. If ADDISON aſſiſted him at all it was probably with his advice, and that muſt have injured the play; for it is the only dramatic production of STEELE that has a caſt of that dull inſipid regularity for which ADDISON has been ſo much admired by the French.

The *Lying Lover*, performed in 1704, is certainly STEELE's weakeſt play, probably owing to the careleſs negligence with which it is written; for, though it muſt be confeſſed CORNEILLE's *Menteur* in ſome degree furniſhed the outline of it, yet it cannot be conſidered materially as a plagiary, becauſe the character of the Lyar is fair general game,

and perhaps this author would have treated it better had he not lazily adopted from another inſtead of ſearching for ſomething better in his own mind, for the *Menteur* is not CORNEILLE's beſt play, nor, if it were, did he write comedy ſo well as STEELE.

The *Lying Lover* was unſucceſsful, and its author, in conſequence, inſtead of conſidering this hint as a wholeſome admonition, wrote no more for the ſtage till 1709. We will, therefore, leave him to his other purſuits, one of which gave the public ſufficient reaſon to rejoice at his indifferent ſucceſs on the ſtage; I mean the *Tatler*; a work replete with a thouſand dramatic requiſites, and which, through a perfectly original medium, taught the world to judge with preciſion, taſte, and elegance, on intereſting yet familiar manners.

It ſhould ſeem, after what I have ſaid of female writers, that I ſhall find ſome difficulty in ſpeaking of Mrs. CENTLIVRE; for, if I allow her the merit the world has awarded her, I falſify my general opinion, and, if I do not, I deſert that criterion, public diſcrimination, which I have every where conſented to abide by.

I do not, however, find myſelf in any ſuch predicament, All I have ever ſaid has amounted to no

more than that when women loſe that female delicacy which is their worthieſt deſignation, and become SAPHOS in writing, they may be as well SAPHOS in every other reſpect; and, out of compliment to the leſs outrageous and more lovely part of their ſex, I ſhould have no objection to diſtinguiſh them at once by a neuter gender*. But I ſee nothing of this in Mrs. CENTLIVRE; for, though ſhe uſes Latin, French, and Spaniſh, in her plays, particulars which have aſtoniſhed ſome of her biographers, and convinced them that ſhe muſt have been a prodigy of learning, yet, as her plots were generally borrowed from the Spaniſh authors, through French tranſlators, inſtead of inventing, ſhe had nothing to do but to quote.

I will not, however, deny that many of her plays poſſeſs conſiderable merit, and I am willing alſo to confeſs that there is a tierceneſs in the remarks of women, when they write tolerably, for nothing more as to writing can we allow Mrs. CENTLIVRE, that often hits familiar manners with great neatneſs; and thus plays and letters have occaſionally boaſted an

* I have often thought, on conſidering the well known though not very decent remark on CÆSAR, alluding to the profligacy of his paſſions, which will occur to all claſſical men, that he would have made a good huſband for SAPHO.

apt originality from the pens of females which have lent embelliſhment to literature, the beſt ſpecimens of which will be found upon the whole in the plays of this lady, and the letters of Lady WORTLEY MONTAGUE. Nay, I will go further, for indeed I am fonder of praiſing than of blaming, and ſay I have remarked a thouſand times among intelligent audiences, that the quickeſt and moſt infallible diſcrimination has made its firſt appearance among the ladies, and that their approbation has generally pointed out the very paſſages for which an author would naturally and worthily feel a predilection.

By this criterion then let Mrs. CENTLIVRE be judged. Since ſhe has riſqued puerility rather than go beyond nature; ſince, in matters of plot and character, ſhe has generally had recourſe to authors of ſterling ability, and been careful not to injure or lower the value of their merit, for whenever ſhe did this ſhe miſerably deceived herſelf; ſince ſhe never attempted to ſurprze the world with any new ſpecies of logic to make it appear that four and four make nine, but was upon all occaſions content with taking nature as ſhe found her, let us honeſtly allow the good lady, ſince ſhe would write, as much praiſe, at leaſt, for an attempt to exhibit men and manners without exaggeration, as candour is willing to award thoſe females in ſtilts, who, through the me-

dium of epithet, metaphor, and figure, laviſhly deal out ideas and fondly fancy they are deſcribing the world.

In order to ſee how far her works will bear out theſe obſervations, without examining into the truth of whether Mrs. CENTLIVRE ran away from her mother at a tender age and cohabited at college with the celebrated ANTHONY HAMMOND, paſſing for a boy, or whether ſhe had any ſtep-mother at all; whether her third huſband fell in love with her as ſhe was performing Alexander the Great, or whether ſhe ever performed on the ſtage at all; or in ſhort whether any of the circumſtances relative to her are truth, in which her biographers, in their love of truth and candour, have comfortably ſet down a ſtring of aſſertions as conſiſtent as thoſe above, I ſhall now look into the merits of thoſe dramatic pieces, eight in number, which ſhe produced before 1708.

None of theſe plays are of that deſcription which gives the beſt ſecurity to Mrs. CENTLIVRE's reputation. The *Perjured Huſband*, performed in 1700, is a tragedy, and therefore totally out of this lady's ſtyle of writing. The theatrical propenſity is generally towards tragedy at ſtarting, whether in writing

or in acting. Moſt of the Scrubs have been originally Richards, and the terror of the bowl and dagger has uſually more attraction for inexperienced writers than the pleaſure of the ſock and the maſk. Her ſecond attempt, probably owing to the advice of ſome friend, was a comedy. It was called *Love's Contrivance*, and is little more than MOLIERE'S *Medicin Malgre Lui*, which had but little effect till the ſubject was, as it ought to be, compreſſed into a farce by FIELDING.

The *Beau's Duel*, 1704, is a flimzy piece which was very little noticed at firſt, and is now entirely forgotten. The *Stolen Heiriſs* has the misfortune to have been plunged into ſtill darker obſcurity. The *Gameſter*, which came out in 1705, reſcued, however, the fame of its author from that gloom which the foregoing puerile attempts had caſt over it. It is a tranſlation of the *Diſſipateur* of DESTOUCHES, in which the original author, who wrote with ſtrength, is not injured, nor is the foundation, which is pretty firm, ſhaken. This comedy, therefore, aſſiſted by a prologue from ROWE had tolerable ſucceſs.

The *Baſſet Table*, performed in 1706, is more buſy than the *Gameſter*, but leſs intereſting. It had

weak pretentions to ſucceſs, and therefore could not make its way with any great advantage, eſpecially as the Engliſh audience became at this particular time good diſcriminating judges. *Love at a Venture*, 1706, was not performed in the regular courſe of theatrical buſineſs, being brought out at BATH. If it had a claim to praiſe that claim was never ratified by the teſt of an appearance on a London theatre. The *Platonic Lady*, brought out in 1707, is another inſtance of that inſipidity that pervaded Mrs. CENTLIVRE's plays till ſhe produced The *Buſy Body*; a comedy which the actors predicted would be damned though it turned out to be one of the pleaſanteſt pieces on the ſtage. Till the examination of that and the remainder of this lady's productions, I muſt now leave this ſubject to look after CIBBER and bring up my account of inferior authors to 1708; after which I ſhall go regularly on with the ſtate of the ſtage to GARRICK.

CHAP. VIII.

CIBBER.

As I do not profeſs to be the regular biographer of thoſe characters which fall under my examination in the proſecution of this work, I cannot of courſe ſay much of the chequered life of CIBBER; a life that FIELDING has whimſically ſaid he ſeems to have lived on purpoſe to have an opportunity of apologizing for; but, as he has himſelf given an ample account of it in that apology, full certainly of moſt fulſome egotiſm, but nevertheleſs richly ſtored with intereſting theatrical information, and I may with ſtrict propriety notice all that relates to the moſt active part of his life, I ſhall find plenty of opportunity of blending with the public character the private man.

For this, however, I am not quite ripe. It would create little leſs than repetition to notice it here, as it ſo completely blends itſelf with the ſtate of the ſtage onwards to GARRICK, which I ſhall ſhortly

have occaſion to bring up. Some few general obſervations may notwithſtanding be neceſſary, and to theſe at preſent I ſhall confine myſelf.

CIBBER was perhaps, upon the whole, a character of as ſingular utility to the theatre as any that ever lived; for without any extraordinary inherent genius, by judgment, by art, by ingenuity, and by perſeverance, he became eminent as an actor, as an author, and as a manager; and I think it is not difficult to pronounce that, in the laſt capacity, GARRICK modelled his conduct upon CIBBER's plan.

Conſcious of the impoſſibility of attaining reputation as an author by bold and genuine traits of intuitive genius, he contented himſelf with keeping within the modeſty of nature, and what he loſt on the ſide of fire and ſpirit, he by this means gained on the ſide of truth and morality. Thus when the *Anathema* of COLLIER was fulminated againſt thoſe oaks DRYDEN, CONGREVE, and the reſt, CIBBER kept himſelf as inoffenſive and ſecure as that laurel with which he was afterwards ſo harmleſsly adorned.

When RICH and his partners were pulling and tugging at the theatrical bone till they had made it all over mud without ſatisfying their hunger, CIB-

BER watched their motions; and, finding at length where it had been hid, with true ſagacity appropriated it to himſelf. He ſaw the certain conſequences of thoſe contentions which had convulſed the theatrical ſtate, he had himſelf been an advocate for morality, he therefore applied every ſenſible and effectual remedy to cure thoſe evils, and at a time too when they had grown to the moſt alarming height. He ſaw that conciliation, and not perverſeneſs, honeſty, and not chicanery, were the only means to ſave the ſtage; and theſe, whether from principle or intereſt it does not alter the argument, he fairly and judiciouſly applied; and, that his aſſociates might cordially co-operate with his meaſures, he, like RANDOLPH'S Colax, ſo accommodated himſelf to their ſeparate tempers that he not only, whenever any diſpute aroſe, reconciled them to one another, but himſelf to both.

As an actor he had a more difficult taſk to perform; but to him obſtacles were incentives. Nature, even according to his own account, with all his egotiſm, had denied him almoſt every theatrical requiſite; yet he found a ſubſtitute for all, and made ſtudy, perfectneſs, and judgement, arreſt as much the attention of the public as others did truth, elegance, and nature.

It muſt be confeſſed there are always characters enough in which this ſtyle of acting may be exerciſed with effect; and, to help this, he introduced his Lord Foppington, a part which was certainly a happy hit at extravagant and ridiculous folly. In ſhort, uniting theſe three capacities in himſelf, he ſo made his abilities in one department ſubſervient to the reſt; that, keeping the real intereſt of the theatre in view upon the broad principle of its ſerving the purpoſe of morality, it cannot be denied that he muſt be conſidered as meritoriouſly eminent in all his departments.

This will as I go on be gradually made out, in the mean time let us examine his plays up to 1708.

Love's Laſt Shift, which was performed in 1696, and which I have already been compelled to ſpeak of in my account of The *Relapſe*, does its author infinite credit. Cibber had that ſort of predilection for the ſtage which no arguments, no diſcouragement, no diſappointment, however mortifying, could reſtrain. In ſpight of his ſurprizing the actors and the town into a conviction that, however he might be unqualified by nature for an actor, he found ſo perfect a reſource in his good ſenſe and his diſcrimination as to ſurmount all difficulties and pleaſe by

an appeal, if not to the ſenſes, at leaſt to the underſtandings of his audience; I ſay, in ſpight of this, his companions would not by any means allow his claim to any rank in his profeſſion, and they even connived at his ruin, when an unexpected occaſion put the part of Fondlewife into his hands in CONGREVE's play of the *Old Bachelor*. Their words were, "If the fool has a mind to blow himſelf up "at once, let us even give him a clear ſtage for it."

Knowing completely thus circumſtanced what to do, and finding that while POWELL was imitating BETTERTON, he ſhould gain upon the public by imitating DOGGET, he continued to get ſo ſtrong a hold of their favour that it was decided from that moment that though he was a peculiar actor he had certainly conſiderable merit. The difficulties however thrown in his way by his brethren were not eaſy to ſurmount, eſpecially as they ſo far had reaſon on their ſide as to object to acting which derived all its effect from labour and art.

In conſequence of theſe obſtacles which repreſented that there was no character already written in his way he was compelled to write a character for himſelf, and to all theſe circumſtances CIBBER certainly had great obligations. Indeed when an en-

vied public man is ſtimulated to ſtretch his genius and put out its ſtrength at all points to manifeſt its excellence and power he is generally the better for it as long as he lives, for he ſurprizes himſelf into a conviction of latent merit which he little ſuſpected he ever poſſeſſed, and which perhaps would never have ſhewn itſelf had it not been by ſuch adventitious circumſtances called ſo forcibly into action.

Wound up to the neceſſity of providing for his reputation as an actor, and bound more ſeriouſly to beware that in the added capacity of author he did not experience a irreparable fall, more than common exertion became indiſpenſibly requiſite; he, therefore, worked himſelf up to the proper pitch and ſtampt a reputation in both lights, which was never afterwards denied him. The great trait of *Love's Laſt Shift* is the moral foundation on which, with conſummate good ſenſe, eſpecially conſidering the time when it was written, CIBBER conſtructed this play, and which, in ſpight of the unnatural, and indeed impoſſible circumſtance of a man's making love to his wife and not knowing her, obtained for it a permanent reputation. It might however eaſily have been perfect. Mrs. Loveleſs might have paſſed

for a foreign Courtizan, which would have been a complete diſguiſe and have thrown a out better lure. It muſt however be allowed, and time has proved the truth of the aſſertion, that *Love's Laſt Shift* is a play of that judicious kind by which the intereſt of the ſtage is beſt promoted.

As a proof that CIBBER was obliged to muſter the whole ſtrength of his beſt exertions in the production of his firſt play, he appears to have ſo exhauſted himſelf that it was a long time before he repleniſhed his mind with a good ſtock of materials; for *Woman's Wit*, brought out in 1697, except that part of it which he wrought into a farce called The *School Boy*, and which after all was not original, is a very poor buſineſs indeed. *Xerxes*, a tragedy, produced in 1699, is ſtill leſs worthy of mention. It was damned the firſt night, which STEELE notices in his Theatrical Inventory in the *Tatler*, one article of which is "The imperial robes of Xerxes never "worne but once."

Love makes a Man, however, made CIBBER's reputation; for it eſtabliſhed him in all opinions as a judicious and ſenſible dramatic writer. It was performed in 1700, and is evidently taken in many places from the *Cuſtom of the Country*, and the

Elder Brother, of BEAUMONT and FLETCHER, or rather from the ſource whence thoſe authors drew their materials for their plays. It is, however, infinitely beyond every thing that has been done upon the ſubject; and, if it only boaſted the humourous contraſt between Clodio and Don Cholerick, it is impoſſible, for ſtage effect, to be carried to a greater degree of perfection. It is perfectly alive and diverting, and will ever be a favourite, for whatever mirth it affords us we ſhall never repent of upon reflection.

CIBBER's next attempt was an alteration of SHAKESPEAR's *Richard the Third*, in which he manifeſted much judgement, and indeed much modeſty; for, plainly feeling himſelf unequal to follow the ſtyle of his great original, he reſtored paſſages from SHAKESPEAR's other plays to fill up the chaſms he found it neceſſary to make in properly adapting it to the ſtage. There were no doubt, with all its admirable merit, many tedious and trifling parts in the original play, which cooled the intereſt of the different ſcenes; by this judicious alteration the events follow with more rapidity, and are indeed more affecting, and it cannot be denied that the ſterling merits of SHAKESPEAR in this wonderful play are rendered more brilliant by the poliſh they have re-

ceived from CIBBER, whoſe ſole care has been, by rubbing off the duſt of time, to diſplay its luſtre to greater advantage.

She Would and She Would Not. performed in 1703, and derived from a Spaniſh ſource, is a play full of pleaſantry, whim, and intereſt. Don Manual and Trapanti, are drawn in a bold and maſterly manner, and thoſe ladies who have determined in their firſt appearance to ſport as much as poſſible their perſonal charms, have generally choſen Hypolita by way of debut. This comedy has been, probably, ever ſince it was written on the ſtock liſt, and will ever continue ſo; ſubject, however, more or leſs to repetition in proportion as actors are found to ſupport the characters.

The *Careleſs Huſband*, which came out the following year, is a very extraordinary play. The plot is ſlender, the intereſt is familiar, and the characters are of that deſcription which in general create the leaſt anxiety in an audience. It has no poſitively comic incidents nor perſonages to chequer and break the chain of circumſtances, which the author has choſen from common events in high life. It profeſſes to delineate no more than elegant manners, a picture in general of all others the moſt pal-

ling and vapid, and yet has he thrown a peculiar grace and elevation into his play; that though it conſiſts of but ſeven characters, two or three of which are perpetually before you, it continually excites and gratifies every laudable curioſity.

It was the faſhion for CONGREVE and others to ſay of CIBBER that his plays had in them only a great many things that were like wit, but that in reality were not wit; but this was only gloſſing over that diſappointment they felt themſelves. CONGREVE in particular, at finding the productions of this author preferred to theirs. CIBBER, by a cloſe attention to the beſt merits of them all, and a careful determination to ſhun their errors, ſteered a ſort of middle courſe that brought him to his mark more expeditiouſly and more ſecurely than they, with all their genius, arrived at theirs. To this he added a peculiar excellence of his own, and this was a happy knack of penning the common converſation, a little elevated, perhaps, of elegant and courtly characters; by which means he united all the eſſence of ETHERIDGE, SEDLEY, and that ſet, adopting the wit and ſhunning the profligacy, and with wonderful felicity blended levity and honour, and regulated the freedom of CHARLES, by the morality of WILLIAM.

Thus was the merit of The *Careleſs Huſband* taſted in a double ſenſe. It was a ſchool for elegant manners, and an example for honourable actions. The frailty of human nature was well expoſed, and well attoned for; and perſonages in high and exalted ſtations were made to feel themſelves dignified by the exerciſe of that honour which reſults from conviction and reflection, at the ſame time that their manners were courtly, and their converſation edifying.

Indeed this peculiar excellence in CIBBER, which had ſomething ſo like wit that it anſwered his purpoſe full as well as if it had really been ſo, conjured up another kind of ſlander which has been almoſt conſtantly, by the envious and malignant, charged upon that merit they want the ability to imitate. It was moſt curiouſly found out that CIBBER was not the author of his own works, and thus the productions that POPE afterwards conſigned to eternal oblivion for their dullneſs, acknowledging them to be CIBBER's, were, in the zenith of their reputation, denied to be his on account of their extraordinary merit.

Perolla and Izadora, a tragedy, was produced by CIBBER in 1706, and like the reſt of his plays of

this deſcription was very ſoon laid by. It ſhould ſeem that he wrote this piece in compliment to lord ORRERY, whoſe aſſiſtance he acknowledges in his preface to have received, and to which he modeſtly attributes even its very ſmall ſucceſs, for it was performed but ſix times.

The *School Boy* is a very pleaſant farce, and was altered by CIBBER from his comedy of *Woman's Wit*. The *Comical Lovers*, 1707, is a haſty alteration of DRYDEN's *Maiden Queen*, and *Marriage ala Mode*. It however was well received and has been ſometimes repeated, but never with any marked ſucceſs.

The *Double Gallant* is a much better play. It came out the ſame year. It was ſeverely treated when it made its original appearance; but, upon being revived about two years afterwards, it became a great favourite, and has ſo continued to this day. There are certainly many admirable ſcenes and ſituations in it; and, though a reſemblance of Atall may be found in twenty different Spaniſh plays, CIBBER has managed both that and many other things with adroitneſs and judgement.

The *Lady's Laſt Stake*, brought out in 1708, is again a play of great merit, but CIBBER had by this

time refined rather too much upon faſhionable manners, and it began to be evident that the ſtage wanted ſomething more to ſupport it than high life, which by the way is not always natural life, and that mere elegance for want of contraſt became vapid. This ſeems to have been CIBBER's opinion, for he immediately after this brought out pieces more diverſified; but theſe, not being within my preſent purſuit, I ſhall leave them till I have brought up other authors to 1708, after which we ſhall go through the whole conduct of CIBBER in quality of manager, a ſituation which he filled with great credit to himſelf, and advantage to the cauſe of the theatre.

CHAP. IX.

SOUTHERN, MRS. PIX, MRS. MANLEY, MRS. COCKBURNE, LORD LANDSDOWNE, DENNIS, OLDMIXON, MOTTEAUX, AND GILDON.

RATHER than make three eras in my account of SOUTHERN, for he produced plays before the Revolution, in the interval between that event and 1708, and afterwards as far on as 1726, I have neglected him ſo far in order to bring as much of him as poſſible into one point of view.

SOUTHERN was a poet of extraordinary value, but his writings have two characters, which he ſeems to have been conſcious of to his ſhame; for, knowing how much more the world is caught with frivolity than reaſon, he divided his reputation in two, and wrote ribaldry and licentiouſneſs for the public, and beauty and nature for himſelf. This he pathetically lamented to lord CORK, but he ſeems to have

forgot to mention that what he did was to comply with every whim, however abſurd and derogatory, for intereſt; for it is notorious that SOUTHERN contrived to get conſiderably a better recompence for his labours than any author of his time; and, as a proof of this, though he produced few pieces during a very long life, he died the richeſt of the dramatic poets *.

His conduct will be in ſome degree developed in an account of his plays, and therefore we will proceed with thoſe. The *Loyal Brother* was produced in 1682, at a time when the tory intereſt was uppermoſt, and SOUTHERN did not therefore fail to compliment, for reward, King JAMES, then Duke of YORK. He was, however, very little rewarded by public applauſe, for the *Loyal Brother* had but indifferent ſucceſs on the ſtage.

The *Diſappointment* was SOUTHERN's firſt comedy. It was performed in 1684. and had tem-

* The fact is that there was nothing to which SOUTHERN did not condeſcend to get money for his plays. By one of them he is ſaid to have cleared, beſides the wages of his flattery, which were conſiderable, ſeven hundred pounds, to acquire which ſum DRYDEN at the ſame time was obliged to write ſeven plays. This is averred as a fact, and that DRYDEN, who was ſometimes mean himſelf, by the bye, reprobated him for his meanneſs.

porary ſucceſs, but it is full of licentiouſneſs, and therefore died with the age that produced it. *Sir Anthony Love*, 1691, is a comedy ſtill licentious, but of a better caſt. It had very great ſucceſs, and is one of thoſe for which he got ſo well paid. The *Wives' Excuſe*, 1692, is probably SOUTHERN's beſt comedy. It is much more endurable, as to its dialogue, than his other comedies, and the conduct has more of the right ſort of intereſt; but it is far from being a good play. The *Maid's Laſt Prayer*, 1693, has ſo much merit as that it ſerved for the ſubject of of a ſong written by CONGREVE.

SOUTHERN's next play, The *Fatal Marriage*, however redeemed his reputation with the judicious, who certainly before had only a ſuſpicion of his being a good writer. Here their ſuſpicions were well confirmed, and they had only to lament that he ſhould couple ſo much beautiful writing with ſo much contemptible traſh. It was brought out in 1694, and continued in the hetrogeneous ſtate of a tragi comedy till GARRICK very judiciouſly ſeperated the farcical part from the pathetic, the latter of which is moſt impreſſively natural, and brought it out ſupported by himſelf and Mrs. CIBBER. Since which it has been a known and acknowledged favourite of the theatre, and it certainly contains

many happy paſſages which, for exquiſite power over the heart, are perhaps not to be equalled unleſs in *Oronooko.*

Oronooko, a play, as far as it relates to the tragic part, full of beauty, truth, and nature, was produced in 1690. The critics, and indeed the world have loudly complained, and with reaſon of the ribaldry and frivilous ſtuff put into the mouths of the planters; but it is extremely difficult to know what to do with theſe biforms, for the circulation belongs every where; and, though it is eaſy to cut off the deformity. there is always a danger of wounding ſome vital part. This has been clearly proved by the various attempts at an alteration of this play, one of which, that made by HAWKESWORTH, is very reſpectable. If, nevertheleſs, ſome writer of conſiderable ability were to perfect, or rather enlarge, the ſtory by ſuch dramatic requiſites as are congenial to it, the pains would be well repaid by the reputation that would reſult from it; for it has nature ſo correctly true, tenderneſs ſo exquiſitely touching, and ſentiment ſo nobly dignified, that, if SOUTHERN had left behind him nothing more than the ſcenes between Oronooko and Imoinda, they would have compoſed a gem, ſmall indeed, but ineſtimable.

The *Fate of Capua*, a tragedy, 1700, is an attempt by SOUTHERN in another way, for it is full of politics. In ſhort it is written with an eye to buſineſs, and the author has not been ſparing of that flattery for which no doubt he was handſomely paid. The domeſtic ſcenes, however, are full of beauty and intereſt, but by no means ſo valuable as thoſe in *Oronooko*, or even in *Iſabella*. SOUTHERN brought out nothing after this play till 1719.

Mrs. PIX, Mrs. MANLEY, and Mrs. TROTTER, alias COCKBURNE, made up a triumvirate of Lady wits who enjoyed a great deal of the admiration of the namby pamby critics, and the indifference, and ſometimes the ridicule of thoſe whom heaven had vouchſafed to endow with taſte and judgement.

Mrs. PIX wrote nine dramatic pieces. The firſt a farce, 1696, was called The *Spaniſh Wives*. It is entirely borrowed, and, after a few nights, was returned to the owner. *Ibrahim the Twelfth*, ſame year, is a tragedy, and the warmeſt advocate that I can find for it only allows that it is not contemptible. The *Innocent Miſtreſs*, a comedy, 1697, borrowed from Sir GEORGE ETHERIDGE's *Man of Mode*, is much inferior to the original, and therefore very ſoon got out of faſhion. The *Deceiver Deceived*, a comedy, 1698, was helped forward by DUFREY

and MOTTEAUX, but ineffectually, for it had no ſucceſs. *Queen Catherine*, a tragedy, ſame year, reigned a very ſhort time; for, in ſpight of the aſſiſtance of all the triumvirate, and particularly a prologue from Mrs. TROTTER, ſhe abdicated her throne in about four nights.

The *Falſe Friend*, a tragedy, 1699, has not found a ſingle advocate among all the panegyriſts of Mrs. PIX, therefore we may naturally ſuppoſe it played her falſe as well as others. The *Czar of Muſcovy*. 1701. Here Mrs. PIX was determined to do the thing at once and introduce PETER the Great upon the Engliſh ſtage. The emperor, however, though at that time he was playing a conſpicuous part on the theatre of the world, was ſcurvily handled, and forced, in ſpight of all his former victories, to a precipitate retreat The *Double Diſtreſs*, a tragedy, was as ſcurvily treated as the *Czar Peter*, and in the ſame year. Mrs. PIX went as far as *Perſepolis* for her plot; but, whether ſhe loſt it in her way back again, or in whatever manner ſhe managed to convey it to her audience, for I believe ſhe had but one, it was the univerſal opinion that ſhe had been wool-gathering.

With The *Conqueſt of Spain* we ſhall take leave of Mrs. PIX, of which play we have as few parti-

culars as of the reſt. Indeed it ſhould ſeem as if all her productions had been foiſted on the public through the medium of connexions; and, juſt as we have frequently ſeen in the productions of lady writings, they became a ſort of faſhion of the ephemeron kind, but were too ſlight to be permanent.

Of Mrs. MANLEY a great deal has been ſaid, and the obſervation which has continually occurred to me in the accounts of biographers in general, who, out of tenderneſs to their heroes and heroines, attribute to them all kinds of vices which they pretend to qualify into misfortunes, obtains here very particularly. Mrs. MANLEY was tricked into a falſe marriage, was falſely accuſed by the Ducheſs of CLEVELAND of intriguing with her ſon, and by injuries and unworthy ill treatment was driven to conduct which all the world muſt confeſs was ſhamefully reprehenſible. All this is ridiculous.

Mrs. MANLEY was a woman of turbulent and ungovernable ſpirit; who, fancying ſhe could write, was determined to rule. She wrote a thing in four volumes, where ſhe is ſeverely ſatirical, without meaning or motive, as well on her own ſex as all the reſt of the world; while ſhe herſelf deſerves univerſal deteſtation for her own wanton and lacivious

deſcriptions in the very work in which ſhe affects to admoniſh others. This work would never have rendered her popular but for the folly of the miniſters of that time, who were ſtupid enough to fancy this mad production a ſatire on the friends of the Revolution.

A warrant was iſſued againſt her with all imaginable ſolemnity, ſhe was denied the uſe of pen, ink, and paper, and treated as a perſon dangerous to the ſtate; whereas her offence was only againſt common ſenſe, in which, indeed, her accuſers ſeemed determined to be even with her. After lord SUNDERLAND, however, had made himſelf ridiculous enough by perſonating the principal character in this ſilly farce he was contented to take all the reproach to himſelf, and give all the popularity to her by diſcharging her, as he had retained her, without being able to give a reaſon for it.

The miniſtry ſoon after this changed, and another ſet came in, who treated her more kindly but more ridiculouſly than the former, for ſhe was immediately invited by them to become their partizan; nay, ſhe is ſaid to have continued the *Examiner* after SWIFT left it off. But theſe traits are ſufficient to ſhew the folly of thoſe who encourage females to

depart from the only ſpere they can adorn, by flattering them that they poſſeſs talents which, were it true, cannot render them amiable if diverted from their appropriate uſe.

Her plays were produced in the following order. The *Royal Miſchief*, a tragedy, performed in 1696, in ſpight of her admirers, who find that the allegories are juſt the metaphors beautiful, and that the rules are correctly obſerved according to ARISTOTLE, is a very extravagant ſtupid thing, which owed the little applauſe it received to her popularity, obtained as we have ſeen above, and which ſoon ſunk into nothing. The *Loſt Lover* is a comedy. It was brought out in the ſame year and had bad ſucceſs, though Mrs. MANLEY's panegyriſts tell us the dialogue was genteel, and the incidents intereſting.

Almyna was the next production of this lady and a tragedy. It was produced in 1707, and is an endeavour to ſhew not what heroic virtue naturally is but what it ought to attempt. In ſhort it is as extravagant as the ſource that produced it; being an ingenious mixture of *Caliph Valid Almanzor*, the *Arabian Nights*, and DENNIS's *Eſſay on Operas*. As there remains but one more production of this female

theatrical Quixote, and I am unwilling to resume the subject, I shall now speak of it even though it was not produced till the year 1717. It was called *Lucius, the first Christian King of Britain*, and dedicated to STEELE, whom she had formerly abused, and who so good naturedly passed by her folly as to write a prologue for her, and prevail upon PRIOR to write a epilogue, with all which assistance, however, it had very little success.

Mrs. TROTTER, or rather Mrs. COCKBURNE, whom her biographers praise for her knowledge in the Latin grammer and logic, for embracing the Romish communion upon conviction, for her vying in metaphysics with LOCKE, for her love of her husband because he wrote an account of the Mosiac deluge, for her small stature and lively eye, produced five plays.

Agnes de Castro, a tragedy, made its appearance in 1696. It had been before treated by Mrs. BEHN, with whom this lady had better have let it rest, for it procured her neither profit nor praise, except that part of it, says an author, an Irishman probably, which contained a copy of verses to Mr. CONGREVE on his *Mourning Bride*. Her tragedy called *Fatal Friendship*, which came out in 1698, had better suc-

ceſs, and was reprinted in her works which were publiſhed in 1751 by Dr. BIRCH. The warmeſt advocate, however, of this lady only ſays it was the moſt perfect of her dramatic pieces.

The *Unhappy Penitent*, a tragedy, 1701, has not left a ſingle trace of its fate, ſo that we know not whether it was good, bad, or indifferent. *Love at a Loſs*, ſame year, I am almoſt as much at a loſs to give an account of. The writers lay its bad ſucceſs to its having being printed very incorrectly, an error certainly, but not of ſuch magnitude as materially to affect the reputation of any production. but at any rate we cannot admit it here right or wrong, for the piece was called in and correctly printed, after which it was performed with as little ſucceſs as before. One more play brings us to the end of this lady's labours. It was called The *Revolution of Sweden*, and performed in 1706; but, anxious as they have been to relate the particulars of Mrs. TROTTER's life as her biographers have trod very tenderly, on the ground of her theatrical reputation, we ſhall imitate them and paſs by this tragedy without ſpeaking of its ſucceſs. As to its intrinſic merit, thoſe who can procure her works and chuſe to take the trouble of reading it, will not find enough entertainment to requite them for their curioſity.

Lord LANDSDOWNE was rather an elegant than a great writer; he felt in himſelf what was due to diſtinguiſhed talents, and had the ſpirit and juſtice to encourage them in others. This heaped on him of courſe the unqualified praiſe of the poets, which both DRYDEN and POPE dealt out pretty profuſely; ſo much ſo, that, were we to take the merit of his poetry from their report of it, we ſhould conceive him to have been a writer of unequalled abilities, whereas his delight was to imitate the manner of other authors even to the copying of their imperfections, and thus his works became a farago of the ſtyle of other writings without having any decided character of their own.

The particular merits of his poems, which are generally occaſional, and imitations of WALLER, of whom he was an enthuſiaſtic admirer, I cannot have room to give an account of. Some of them are in the mouths of thoſe whoſe ears are more tickled with rhime than poetry. His plays, though far from perfect, are his beſt productions.

The *She Gallants*, a comedy, 1696, has been highly ſpoken of and certainly had ſucceſs, till ſome party people taking it into their heads that it was intended as a reflection on the government, which was

impoſſible, for it had been written twelve years before it appeared, when the author was a boy, and when the features of governing bore a different reſemblance, it was ſeverely handled. In ſober judgment this play cannot be greatly praiſed; for, though it has wit and ſatire, or rather ſeverity and fineſſe; yet, as the author piqued himſelf upon having kept the ſcene conſtant to one place, and the action entire, rather a cold recommendation of a lively comedy, and as one mark of it, not a very advantageous one, is an imitation of WYCHERLEY's obſcenity it is not unlikely that the partizans, who put a violent end to its exiſtance, only prevented it from dying a natural death.

Heroic Love, a tragedy on the loves of Agamennon and Chriſeis, had very great ſucceſs, and, indeed, how could it be otherwiſe when the prologue was written by BOLINGBROKE, the epilogue by HIGGONS, when it was praiſed in verſe by DRYDEN, and in proſe by POPE. The kindneſs of all which was very handſome towards LANDSDOWNE, but very unjuſt towards the public, and diſreputable towards themſelves as men of talents; for there is ſome miſerable things in this play.

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* WALPOLE ſays that "it was fortunate for his lordſhip that,

The *Jew of Venice* was performed in 1701; and, when it is ſaid that this comedy was an alteration of SHAKESPEAR'S play, brought forward through the medium of muſic and magnificence, its fate, notwithſtanding all the auxiliary aid that was called in may be eaſily gueſſed at. This noble author was both aſſiſted and praiſed as uſual, but to little purpoſe, for the intereſt of the original is materially injured, and ROWE very juſtly remarks that the Jew is rendered comic, and we are prompted to laughter rather than deteſtation. In this play a maſque was introduced called *Peleus and Thetis*.

The *Britiſh Enchanters*. This piece was originally performed as a tragedy in 1706. The intention of the author of this piece was laudable enough. It

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" in an age when perſecution raged ſo fiercely againſt lukewarm au-
" thors, that he had an intimacy with the Inquiſitor General: how
" elſe could ſuch lines as theſe have eſcaped the bathos."

When thy gods
Enlighten thee, to ſpeak their dark decrees.

To which may be added that this noble author has made the ſapient ULYSSES turn puppet ſhew man, by ending the piece with this diſtich.

Fate holds the ſtrings, and men like children move
But as they're led; ſucceſs is from above.

was to correct the monſtrous extravagance introduced at that time into operas by ſomething more naturally gratifying to the ſenſes. This is allowed by the critics, to be the moſt complete of LANDSDOWNE's works; and, ſince the warmeſt of his admirers muſt allow that there are in it many wretched defects, that thoſe paſſages that have merit ſeldom reach beyond mediocrity, and that there is not a ſingle line of great genius in the whole, juſtice obliges us to pronounce that, however meritoriouſly he might have perſevered in promoting the writings of others, he had no extraordinary cauſe to be vain of his own.

DENNIS, who was diſtinguiſhed more as a critic than as a dramatic writer. has, however, left us nine pieces of different deſcriptions. This author lived in a ſtate of warfare with all mankind, and in particular with the poets. ADDISON, STEELE, and even POPE, would have been friends to him but he completely put it out of their power by treating them with the rankeſt ingratitude, and he paſſed on to old age through a life of turbulence, petulance, and indigence; deſpiſed by every body from principle, and aſſiſted by every body from pity *.

* DENNIS boaſted that though POPE had abuſed him in the

Plot and no Plot, a comedy, 1697, has only the merit of being regular as to the unities. It was a party buſineſs and had but little ſucceſs. *Rinaldo and Arminda*, a tragedy, 1699, is of courſe from Tasso's *Gieruſalemme*, and therefore but ill calculated to ſucceed as a regular piece. It was aſſiſted by the muſic of both Eccles and Purcel, but is after all a ſtrange thing. It put him out of humour, and he did not ſpare, as was his cuſtom to deal out abuſe upon the heads of more fortunate authors, on

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Dunciad, he would compel him to attone for it. Being aſked how, he ſaid he pretty well knew the vanity of the little gentleman, and would, therefore, ſolicit him to write a prologue to a play that, being in extreme poverty, he intended to get acted for his benefit, and that he was ſure, notwithſtanding their mutual enmity, the reputation of appearing charitable would readily induce him to undertake it. He was not deceived. Pope conſented, and the play, thus ſtrengthened, produced a good houſe, while the virtue of forgiveneſs of enemies was loudly chanted to Pope's honour. Both the world, however, and Dennis were deceived, for the prologue was couched in ſuch terms that every line contained ſome fine ironical ſtroke of ſatire againſt the poor devil he profeſſed to ſerve; and, as this was within a ſhort time of Dennis's death when the ſhafts of his malevolence could no longer wound, and the fitteſt time in the world for manifeſting that animoſity had ſubſided to make room for benevolence, Pope certainly overacted his part, for ſurely inſulting the diſtreſs he appeared ſolicitous to relieve, muſt have been a conſiderable drawback on his philanthropy, and the beſt of his friends could not vindicate him from having merited the title by which he was for ſome time diſtinguiſhed of the Charitable Cynic.

whom he hoped to revenge himſelf by the ſucceſs of his next play, which however was damned. It was called *Iphigenia*, and appeared in 1700.

The *Comic Gallant*, which is a moſt farcical alteration of SHAKASPEAR's *Merry Wives of Windſor*, was performed in 1702. It is too ridiculous to go into the merit of a thing that was profeſſedly written to amend a piece already perfect. *Liberty Aſſerted.* The ſucceſs of this piece, which was brought out in 1704, almoſt turned poor DENNIS's brain. He began to conceive himſelf an object of the utmoſt importance; and, becauſe in the plot, which repreſents the wars carried on among the Indian nations, there was a reſemblance to the ſituation of ENGLAND and FRANCE, and he had thrown in a number of hackneyed compliments on the government of this country at the expence of our neighbours, he conſidered himſelf, and procured himſelf to be conſidered, which kind of matters are very eaſily managed, as of the utmoſt conſequence to the nation.

Puffed up by this adventitious favour, which proceeded in him from ſentiments neither dutiful nor ſincere, but were merely a catch for popularity, his vanity carried him to the moſt ridiculous height.

He went so far as to fancy his play had done so much injury to the French nation that the king of FRANCE would never consent to a peace without insisting upon his being given up as a preliminary article. Nay, full of this he even applied to the duke of MARLBOROUGH for his interest to avert this dreadful consequence of his patriotism, who very coolly told him to be perfectly easy, for that he had endeavoured to do the French as much mischief as possible and he had not found it necessary to conclude himself in the treaty.

Many other circumstances are related of this vain and credulous man; who, because he had done his duty by accident, or rather through interest, fondly fancied rewards and favours out of all measure were due to him, when thousands, from principle, were sincerely labouring for the interest and agrandizement of their country without the view or the expectation of any further reward than the pleasure resulting from a consciousness of having honourably discharged an incumbent duty.

The next piece of this author was called *Gibralter*. It was a comedy, performed in 1705, and deservedly damned. *Orpheus and Euridice*, a masque, with little merit and no success, followed in 1709.

In 1709, was performed *Appius and Virginia*, a tragedy, which was damned*; and, that I may finiſh this author, he produced in 1720, *Coriolanus*, a bad, and of courſe an unſucceſsful alteration from SHAKESPEAR.

OLDMIXON, who throughout his life, which was reſtleſs and unquiet, indulged himſelf in malevolence and cynical aſperity, who wrote himſelf into the *Dunciad*, which he little regarded, having at the ſame time written himſelf into a place, whoſe actions in ſhort are ſo little worth recording that they would have peaceably reſted with his bones had not EUSDEN, ADDISON, and POPE abſurdly acknowledged themſelves hurt at his criticiſms, produced three dramatic pieces.

Amyntas was a tranſlation and had no ſucceſs. It

* DENNIS was ſeverely mortified at the fall of his play, having been convinced that by introducing a new kind of thunder it could not have failed of ſucceſs. The thunder certainly was very good, and therefore the managers, having been at the expence of it, were determined to keep it for general uſe. Some nights after the damnation of his play, DENNIS was at the repreſentation of *Macbeth*, and preſently recognized his own thunder. When, unable to reſtrain himſelf, he jumped up. "There, gentlemen," ſaid he to the audience, "there's a ſet of raſcals for you! they get my play damned "and then they ſteal my thunder."

was produced in 1698. The *Grove*, which the author himself does not know what to make of, for he tells the critics that it was first a pastoral, but that the dignity of the characters raised it into the form of a tragedy. was performed in 1703. Its success we know nothing about; but, whether it was little or much its merits cannot be estimated by it, for he was a violent party man, and therefore, wrong or right, most votes of course carried it. The *Governor of Cyprus*, a tragedy, was performed the same year, but of its success nobody has informed us.

Motteaux, though a Frenchman, wrote a number of things, and among others fifteen dramatic pieces. He was a considerable trader in the city, and improved his affairs by being a complete linguist, which qualification fitted him for carrying on foreign correspondence. His plays, except one of them, are of the light kind, and, in some of them, there is vivacity at least, but no approach to excellence in any.

Love's a Jest, performed in 1696, had some success, but soon fell off, and has never since been revived. The *Loves of Mars and Venus*, 1697, taken from Shadwell, Moliere, and an old Italian opera, was assisted by the music of Finger and Eccles. It was a mere trifle, and at last introduced

to make up a part of RAVENSCROFT's *Anatomiſt*. *Novelty* is a bad imitation of DAVENANT's *Playhouſe to Let*. *Europe's Revels* was written on the peace of Ryſwick. *Beauty in Diſtreſs* is a tragedy, and has ſomething, in parts of it, like writing, but upon the whole wants ſtrength and intereſt. The *Iſland Princeſs* is only BEAUMONT and FLETCHER's play under the ſame title made into an opera, which had but little ſucceſs. *Four Seaſons*, a muſical trifle, the muſic by JEREMIAH CLARK, had its hour and died away. *Acis and Galatea* was of the ſame deſcription; the muſic was compoſed by ECCLES. *Britain's Happineſs* is alſo a muſical interlude. *Arſinoe, Queen of Cyprus*, was an opera after the Italian manner; we know nothing of its reception. The *Amorous Miſer* is a comedy, The *Temple of Love* is a paſtoral opera, *Thomyris, Queen of Scythia*, is an opera, *Love's Triumph* is a paſtoral opera, and *Love Dragooned* is a farce, the laſt of theſe was brought out in 1708.

GILDON, who fell into the common error of fancying that, becauſe he was a man of learning, of neceſſity he could not fail to write, followed up a number of ſubjects with erudition enough, but without the ſmalleſt ray of genius. His plays are five in number and called The *Roman Bride's Re-*

venge, *Phaeton*, *Meaſure for Meaſure*, *Love's Victim*, and The *Patriot*.

The firſt of theſe is a very haſty production, which, nevertheleſs, would been worſe, probably, by too much reviſion; for GILDON always poliſhed away the ſhape of his ſubject. It is a Roman ſtory, and ſmacks of SENECA and JONSON, without the merits of either; a kind of ſhadow of a figure in lead; it ſeems to reflect the weight without being relieved by the prominences.

Phaeton is an imitation of *Euripides*, and modelled according to the rules of the ancients, which is enough to prove that it could not ſucceed. It ſold, however, ſays an author, ſpeaking of the merits of the play, for there were ſome ſtrictures annexed to it on COLLIER's book. *Meaſure for Meaſure* was a bad alteration of SHAKESPEAR's play. *Love's Victim* was damned, and The *Patriot*, which was taken from LEE's *Lucius Junius Brutus*, in ſpight of the ſupport it received from DENNIS and FARQHUAR, the firſt of whom wrote the prologue, and the other the epilogue, ſhared the ſame fate. The firſt of theſe plays came out in 1697, and the laſt in 1703.

CHAP. X.

INFERIOR AUTHORS TO 1708.

I SHALL now go into an account, a very ſummary one it muſt be, of the inferior, or rather ſubordinate authors, for ſome of them, out of their dramatic employment, have a fair claim to commendation, and theſe, to render my ſtatement accurate, I ſhall bring forward in chronological order to 1708.

Of BETTERTON I have hitherto only ſpoken as an actor. He wrote, however, or rather dabbled for the ſtage, about in the ſame degree as BARON wrote in FRANCE. His firſt play was a tragedy, called The *Roman Virgin.* It was performed in 1679, and turned out to be only an alteration of WEBSTER's *Appius and Virginia.* The *Revenge, or a Match in Newgate,* which DODSLEY has printed in his old Plays, without giving us his opinion, by

the way, as to who is the author, is nothing more than MARSTON's *Courtezan*, better adapted, perhaps, to the ſtage.

The *Propheteſs* is BEAUMONT and FLETCHER's play altered into an opera. There is ſome ſweet muſic in it, compoſed by PURCEL; but, though it has been frequently revived it never pleaſed. BETTERTON's arrival from FRANCE whith his ſcenery gave him the firſt idea of bringing forward this piece. *Henry the Fourth* is SHAKESPEAR's play indifferently altered. The *Amorous Widow, or the Wanton Wife*, is MOLIERE's *George Dandin.* There is ſome humour in it, however, and it is ſometimes played as a farce even now. The *Sequel of Henry the fourth* is the ſecond part of SHAKESPEAR's play as indifferently altered as the firſt. BETTERTON performed Falſtaff and thought he could add to the effect of the character. He, however, found himſelf miſtaken. The *Bondman*, and The *Woman made a Juſtice*, were in the ſtyle of the reſt. The laſt of theſe pieces was performed in 1719, therefore the performance of BETTERTON's dramatic works took up a period of forty years, on which account I have ſpoken of them all together in this place. Some of them are poſthumous, for BETTERTON died in the year 1710.

MOUNTFORT was alſo an author, and upon the whole of a better caſt than BETTERTON; The *Injured Lovers*, 1688, was a tragedy. LANGBAINE charges this author with having, like ſir COURTLY NICE, written for his own amuſement, but without regarding wit. It had little ſucceſs. *Edward the Third*, a tragedy, 1691, is ſaid to be given to MOUNTFORT by BANCROFT. It is, however, taken from the well known ſtory of the *Counteſs of Saliſbury*. *Greenwich Park*, a comedy, ſame year, ſucceeded pretty well. The *Succeſsful Stangers* is borrowed from SCARRON's *Rival Brothers*, but it had merit and deſerved the ſucceſs it met with. It came out in 1696. *Zelmane* was left unfiniſhed by MOUNTFORT, and completed by ſome friend after his death. It ſucceeded more probably out of compaſſion to the memory of the author than from any intrinſic value the play poſſeſſed *.

* MOUNTFORT's untimely end engroſſed public attention to ſuch a degree at the time it happened, that it may not be amiſs to notice it here. Mrs. BRACEGIRDLE had, as we have already ſeen, a number of lovers, all of whom were unſucceſsful, for her virtue was proof againſt every art. A man of the name of HILL; who, among the reſt had been repulſed, was determined to carry her off, and for this purpoſe hired ſome ruffians; who, with the aſſiſtance of lord MOHUN, a kind of mohawk about LONDON, very nearly ſuc-

DOGGET produced a piece called The *Country Wake*, which is yet very well known, under the title of *Hob in the Well*. DRYDEN's ſon wrote a comedy, called The *Huſband his own Cuckold*. It had but little ſucceſs, though CONGREVE wrote the prologue, and the great DRYDEN the preface and the epilogue. TOM BROWNE, who was a facetious, low, impertinent wit, though a good ſcholar, and by no means a bad writer, whoſe vices and follies, had no reliſh for him unleſs they were excited by ſomething novel and excentric; whoſe attachments were indiſcriminate, and without ſincerity, and who would rather loſe his friend than his joke, wrote three

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ceeded in his attempt. The lady, however, was reſcued and reſtored to her friends. Thus diſappointed, he was determined to be revenged of MOUNTFORT, who played the love parts with Mrs. BRACEGIRDLE, and was conſidered as a favoured rival. They loſt not a moment therefore, but, while they were warm in reſentment, went inſtantly and watched MOUNTFORT's houſe, determined to execute their vengeance on him at his return. They were but too ſucceſsful. As he came up to the door, that ſcandal to his rank, lord MOHUN ſaluted him in the moſt friendly manner, which was the ſignal agreed upon for HILL to begin the aſſault, who inſtantly knocked him down; and, before he had time to draw his ſword, cowardly ran him through the body. HILL eſcaped, and lord MOHUN was tried; but MOUNTFORT, with his dying breath, having declared him to be innocent, he was acquitted. He, however, afterwards fell in a duel by the ſame treachery, as he himſelf confeſſed, that he had practiſed on MOUNTFORT.

pieces for the ſtage; all as ſtrange and indefinable as himſelf. Theſe were called *Phyſic lies a Bleeding*, The *Stage Beaux toſſed in a Blanket*, and The *Diſpenſary*. The titles of theſe pieces pretty well ſhew what they are. The ſecond was a ridicule on COLLIER; and, by way of currying favour, it was dedicated to RICH. The *Diſpenſary* was a mere farce.

BURNABY, a faſhionable wit, wrote four faſhionable plays, for they were flimzey and ſoon forgotten. The *Reformed Wife*, 1700, was as we are told, the ground work of CIBBER's *Double Gallant*, but this is not true; for the ſource is Spaniſh, and CIBBER went to the fountain head when the water was clear, BURNABY took his opportunity when the water was muddy. The *Lady's Viſiting Day*, 1701, was viſited but once. The *Modern Huſband*, 1702, was damned owing, as the author has told us, to its being written in a month. The excuſe is inſult added to imbecility. *Love Betrayed*, 1703, is ſtolen from SHAKESPEAR's *Twelfth Night*, and in ſo bare faced a manner that fifty lines were literally tranſcribed from it.

BAKER, who certainly had much more merit than BURNABY, has nevertheleſs been much abuſed

and particularly by WHINCOP; who, at the ſame time he allows his plays to poſſeſs ſtrong marks of the *vis comica*, ſays that they are deſtitute of wit and humour; a ſtyle of criticiſm too often practiſed. His plays came out in the following order:

Humours of the Age, 1701, was a juvenile performance and written haſtily. It certainly has very little to recommend it. *Tunbridge Walks* is a much better attempt. It came out in 1703, and contains both character and ſatire, and rather of the meritorious kind *. *Act at Oxford*, 1704, a comedy, was conſidered as a rude and unbecoming ſatire againſt the Univerſity, and, therefore, prohibited. *Hampſtead Heath*, however, which appeared in 1706, was little more than the former play with alterations. It was as ill received as the other. *Fine Ladies*

* We are told a curious circumſtance relative to this play. Maiden, which character is certainly the origin of all the Fribbles ſince that time, was written to expoſe a folly of which this author had been guilty of, and which his own underſtanding and obſervation had taught him to correct. There certainly cannot be any thing ſo contemptible in any one who wears the form of man as effeminacy; and, if it be true that BAKER ridiculed this puerile and pitiful vice in himſelf to warn others againſt it, leſt they ſhould incur univerſal contempt, we muſt confeſs he had a moſt uncommon degree of Spartan forbearance. It would be no harm if it were oftner imitated.

Airs, 1709, had ſome ſucceſs. Of theſe plays *Tunbridge Walks* upon the whole is greatly ſuperior to the reſt, and is, indeed, the only piece of this author that has kept the ſtage.

It is almoſt loſt time to enumerate many more of theſe authors but cuſtom, and indeed critical neceſſity demand it. I ſhall, therefore, ſay that DILKE, protected by lord STRAFFORD, wrote *Lover's Luck*, *City Ladies*, and The *Pretenders*. The firſt ſtolen from MARMION, CROWNE, and ETHERIDGE, the ſecond original, and therefore good for nothing, and the third ſo indifferent that it ſoon loſt all pretention to notice.

NORTON wrote a play called *Pauſanias*, which GARTH has thus celebrated:

> And Britain, ſince *Pauſanias* was writ,
> Knows Spartan virtue, and Athenian wit.

GOULD, who was firſt a footman, and afterwards a ſchoolmaſter, wrote the *Rival Siſters*, a play ſtolen from SHIRLEY, and *God's Revenge againſt Murder*. SCOTT, lord ROXBURGH's ſecretary, wrote The *Mock Marriage*, and *Unhappy Kindneſs*. The firſt a puerile attempt, and the other a theft from BEAUMONT and FLETCHER, "conſiderably improved,"

ſays the author before me, I ſuppoſe he means in point of indecency, "by the character of the wife, "who provokes the huſband to eaſe her of her "maidenhead."

FILMER, who was a ſtrong advocate for the ſtage againſt COLLIER, wrote a tragedy called The *Unnatural Brother*, which was even duller than COLLIER's book. DRAKE, who was a phyſician, and a political writer, and therefore perpetually incurring the reſentment of death and the pillory, wrote The *Sham Lawyer*, borrowed from BEAUMONT and FLETCHER. PHILIPS, who, according to ſome, wrote one play, to others, two plays, to others three, and to others four, was bred in IRELAND and criticiſed by Iriſhmen, whence has ariſen, perhaps, ſo many bulls. The name of PHILIPS is prefixed to four plays called The *Revengeful Queen*, *Hibernia Freed*, *St. Stephen's Green*, and *Beliſarius*, but whether theſe pieces were the production of four PHILIPSES, or only the PHILIPS ſpoken of at preſent, is perfectly immaterial.

The *Revengeful Queen*, taken from ſir WILLIAM DAVENANT, was not worth ſtealing. *Hibernia Freed* is a very confined buſineſs. *St. Stephen's Green* was not thronged with much company, and

Beliſarius begged in vain for applauſe. WILLIAM WALKER, who went on the ſtage, and afterwards died attorney general at Barbadoes, wrote *Victorius Love*, a tragedy, and *Marry or do Worſe*, a comedy. The firſt performed in 1698, and the other in 1704. THOMAS WALKER wrote a comedy called The *Wit of a Woman*. SMITH, a barriſter, wrote The *Princeſs of Parma*. MANNING, who was a man of ſome conſideration and employed in different embaſſies to SWITZERLAND, was the author of The *Generous Choice*, and *All for the Better*, both comedies. CRAUFORD, hiſtoriographer to queen ANNE, beſides other things, wrote two comedies called *Marriage Alamode*, and *Love at firſt Sight*. The firſt of theſe was written in ten mornings, and performed three evenings, and the other was damned.

The famous BOYER, known by his celebrated Grammer and Dictionary, fled to ENGLAND at the Revolution, being a French Proteſtant, and was author of many ingenious works, the worſt of which was a play called *Achilles in Aulis*. COREY, firſt a barriſter and afterwards an actor, was author of a comedy called *A Cure for Jealouſy*, and a farce called The *Metamorphoſis*. The firſt was totally neglected, deſervedly indeed, owing, however, in ſome degree to the great run of the *Conſtant Couple*, which

COREY, in his impotent revenge, calls a Jubilee farce. The farce was a bungling attempt to make a farce of *Albumazar*. HARRISON, a paten maker, wrote The *Pilgrims*. It is ſpoken well of ſays my author, but it was never acted; rather, I think, a negative compliment.

HIGGINS, a ſtaunch adherent to JAMES the ſecond, wrote a play called The *Generous Conqueror*, the writing of which ſmacks more of the gentleman than the poet. Mrs. WISEMAN, a maid ſervant, having a great deal of leiſure time, ſays her biographer, read novels, wrote a tragedy *, which enabled her ſo ſet up a tavern. It was called *Antiochus the Great*. WILKINSON wrote a play called *Vice Reclaimed*. Lord ORRERY, whoſe public cha-

* Stupid as this obſervation is, many people take it for granted that there is nothing further required to accompliſh works of ingenuity than to have plenty of leiſure time, forgetting that in ſuch caſe all the loungers in the kingdom would be men of genius, than which, heaven knows, nothing can be further from the truth. I declare what follows to be a fact. A gentleman ſaid one day to a voluminous writer, who has been moſt laughably but moſt malignantly ſlandered by a variety of reports that he fathers the works of others inſtead of producing his own, "I am aſtoniſhed when, if "people reflect for a ſingle moment, they cannot credit what they "aſſert, that ſo fooliſh, and ſo wicked a report ſhould prevail as "that you don't write your own works." 'Why ſhould not he 'write them,' ſaid another gentleman, 'he has nothing elſe to do.

racter is so well known that I the less regret the impossibility of going into it here, wrote a comedy called *As you find It*, which is by no means equal to the expectations that might be rationally formed of that nobleman's abilities.

Owen wrote a tragedy called *Hypermnestra*, which was never acted. Dr. Trapp, however he might have understood the ancients, did not understand his own name as it related to theatrical matters, for he wrote a piece, full of bombast and puerility, called *Abra Mule*. The following specimen of the language will make out my assertion.

> Success, and laurels, shall attend my sword,
> And turn my *harp* into a *harpsichord*.

Bladen, who was in the army, and afterwards held the post of Comptroller of the Mint, wrote *Solon*, into which was introduced a masque called *Orpheus and Euridice*. His place, however, coined him a better fortune than his play, for it was refused. Chaves was a merry Andrew, one would imagine, for he wrote a play called The *Cares*, some say The *Cures of Love*, and dedicated it to a Mountebank. Lord Grimston was the author of a play called The *Lawyer's Fortune* *.

* This play is remarkable on account of a whimsical circum-

Estcourt, who I ſhall hereafter ſpeak of when I come to the actors, wrote a play called The *Fair Example*, and an interlude called *Prunella*, which were tolerably well received. Norris, ſon to Jubilee Dicky, and who went on the ſtage, but with much leſs reputation than his father, wrote The *Royal Merchant*, which is only an alteration of the *Beggar's Buſh*, and a farce called The *Deceit*. Stevens, who continued Dugdale's *Monaſticon*, and compiled a Spaniſh Dictionary, wrote a comedy called *An Evening's Intrigue*, almoſt a literal tranſlation. Michelborne, who was once Governor of Londonderry, and who, after adverſe fortunes, was confined in the Fleet, wrote a piece called *Ireland Preſerved, or the Siege of Londonderry*. Goring, concerning whom Coxeter and others have had ſome learned diſputes, and after all have not been able to clear up whether he was a very obſcure perſon, or whether he took the degree of

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ſtance it occaſioned. It was written when the author was but thirteen, and of courſe full of imbecility and abſurdity; in conſequence of which, lord Grimston bought up all the copies he could get. When he ſtood, however, candidate for St. Alban's, the ducheſs of Marlborough, who was his ſtrong opponent, got a new edition of it printed at her own expence, with a frontiſpiece in which the noble author was repreſented as an elephant dancing on a rope. Theſe were diſperſed among the electors, and, why or wherefore, it is difficult to ſay, for both wiſdom and pliability are certainly good parliamentary qualifications, loſt him his election.

Maſter of Arts, which heaven knows he might have done and yet been an obſcure perſon, wrote a tragedy called *Irene*; the celebrated and well known ſubject on which doctor JOHNSON fabricated his only play.

HENLEY wrote an opera called *Alexander*, which PURCEL ſet to muſic. ASTON wrote *Love in a Hurry*, which was written in a hurry and very ſoon hurried off the ſtage*.

* This man, known by the name of TONY ASTON, was a very curious character. He was an attorney and turned actor, and being determined to follow the profeſſion in its primitive ſtyle, he reſorted to all the principal towns in ENGLAND with a performance he called his Medley, which was a farago taken from different plays. His company conſiſted of himſelf, his wife, and his ſon. He was very dexterous in the exertions of his legal abilities, which were frequently called forward in defence of his monopolizing country towns, and he got ſuch a character in this way, and was ſuppoſed to underſtand the ſpirit of the old laws reſpecting public exhibitions ſo well, that he was permitted to ſpeak his ſentiments on a bill pending at that time in the Houſe of Commons, for the regulation of the ſtage.

CHAP. XI.

THE STAGE FROM 1708 TO GARRICK.

We have ſeen that, through the inetrference of colonel Brett, whoſe conduct was certainly dictated by Cibber, that, in 1708, the Haymarket and Drury Lane were eſtabliſhed upon ſeparate intereſts; the firſt, under the management of Swiney, for the exhibition of operas, and the other for plays under the direction of the Patentees, with Rich at their head.

We ſhall now follow the ſtage, through all its changes and viciſſitudes, from that time to Garrick's firſt appearance in Goodman's Fields; which period, almoſt thirty-three years, involves ſuch a variety of circumſtances that, though I mean to be perſpiciuous, I ſhall not have room to be elaborate.

Operas, which I ſhall hereafter give a ſeperate

account of, began to receive conſiderable patronage from the nobility, but they would not probably have keep any material ſtand upon their own foundation, had the experiment been tried for any length of time, which it was not; for in a year after this new eſtabliſhment, SWINEY was again joined by the actors, under a new reſtriction.

The particulars which led to this were as various as they were extraordinary, I ſhall, therefore, give the reader the moſt accurate ſtatement I have been able to collect. RICH, who feared that if the theatre ſhould proſper it would bring on the moment of retribution, for the reaſons I formerly ſtated; no ſooner felt that the ſtrength of the actors, thus united, brought full houſes than, anxious, as CIBBER whimſically has it, of recovering the ſtage to its former confuſion, a conduct incomprehenſible to every body but himſelf, he ſet about oppoſing BRETT; who, with CIBBER at his elbow, had certainly began to work a laudable reformation, and who had ſtudied ſo well the intereſts of the different members of the concern, that actors, authors, and patentees, began to have hope of receiving the juſtice which had been long due to them.

This diſtaſtrous event, for ſo he conſidered it,

Rich was determined to prevent. He began his meaſures by tampering with the patentees; and, as he knew that nothing could ſo completely put them off their guard as his ſeeming to adopt a ſemblance of equity, he appeared to deplore that the concern had not been before in a ſtate to render them that juſtice they were entitled to; but that, now it began to be proſperous, it would be but fair in him and Mr. Brett to make among them ſuch diviſions of the profits as the ſcheme would bear, by way of bringing up former arrears.

This ſpecious kind of conduct he knew would operate two ways. It would induce the patentees to admit that he would have adopted it before had his ability been equal to his inclination, and it would open Brett's eyes in ſuch a manner, by exhibiting to him the alarming ſtate in which the concern was involved, great part of which, however, was imaginary, many of the demands being brought forward by his tools and actually his own; that the firſt would be more patient, under an idea that their loſſes might be one day or other made up, and the other would grow indifferent, or rather alarmed, as having embarked in a ſcheme which, let it ſucceed how it might, ſtood ſo little chance of yielding profit, proportionable to the trouble and anxiety attending it.

Both theſe conſequences were the reſult of Rich's machiavalian ſcheme. He began to gain the confidence of the patentees, and Brett began to be diſcontented, and now, that he might profit by the effects of his duplicity dreſſed like candour, he cauſed a friend to ſuggeſt to Skipwith, who the reader will remember gave up his ſhare to Brett, that, as the theatre was now become an object of conſiderable conſequence, it would be greatly to his intereſt to reſume his right, under the idea that he had only yielded it up to Brett in the nature of a loan.

What arguments were upon this occaſion held out to Skipwith I cannot learn, but it is certainly true that he ſerved Brett which a Chancery ſuppœna, alledging that the aſſignment of the ſhare was only a conveyance in truſt. Brett was piqued at this, and, though he clearly proved that it was neither aſſigned upon truſt nor upon any other limitation whatever; yet, as the world knew he had paid no conſideration for it, and as he ſcorned an obligation under a convention which was ſo illiberally kept, he inſtantly reſigned it, wiſhing Skipwith leſs trouble and more profit than he himſelf had experienced.

Brett immediately withdrew himſelf from the

concern, and, as the formalities neceſſary for the reaſſignment of the ſhare were ſo conſiderably delayed, probably through the connivance of RICH, as not to be completed till after the death of SKIPWITH, our ſubtle politician remained without an opponent except the other patentees, to the management of whom he was pretty well accuſtomed.

Having occaſion for ſome of theſe in quality of tools, he now began his next plan of operations, which was as formerly to tyranize over the actors. He repreſented to his partners, whom he now affected to conſult upon all occaſions, that the actors were too well paid and, that if it met with their approbation he ſhould lower their ſaleries. He, of courſe, received no oppoſition, and this very equitable determination was not only reſolved on but inſtantly put into execution. It was not, however, very quietly ſubmitted to. Some remonſtrated *, others grumbled, and others vowed revenge; which, as there was now no other theatre to go to, was treated with perfect indifference.

* CIBBER, who argued the matter pretty roundly with the patentees, was told by one of them that even, with his reduced ſalary, he had more than GOODMAN received, who was a better actor. "That may be true," ſaid CIBBER, "but you will pleaſe to re-"collect that GOODMAN was forced to go upon the highway for "a livelihood.

From this time the affairs of the theatre, of courſe, got into that ſtate which it appears to have been the delight of RICH's life to ſee them in. The actors grew careleſs, the houſes empty, the patentees diſcontented; all confidence was deſtroyed, and the only theatre was, like the gooſe, cut up for thoſe golden eggs which nothing could produce but time and maturity. In ſhort, being mulct of their immunities, the actors reſolved at once to deſert the profeſſion or obtain redreſs.

This laſt impoſition they conceived would be a good ground work for a complaint to the Lord Chamberlain. They found intereſt to get it preferred and they obtained relief; for an order was immediately iſſued to the patentees to ſhew cauſe why the benefits of the actors had been diminiſhed one-third, contrary to common uſage. The patentees pleaded that the actors had ſigned a paper agreeing to this deduction, and had given their receipts for the two-thirds as a full compenſation. This was declared to have been compulſion on the ſide of the managers which the actors were too powerleſs to reſiſt; and the patentees, in anſwer, inſiſted that even though it were compulſion it was certainly law. The Lord Chamberlain, nevertheleſs, warned the

patentees to refuſe the actors full juſtice at their peril.

So far, however, from liſtening to this advice, or caring for the conſequence of diſobeying it, the actors were more oppreſſed than ever. Theſe grievances were properly repreſented and well ſubſtantiated; and, the very next year after Drury Lane was eſtabliſhed upon a foundation, which, had the proprietors been wiſe, nothing could have ſhaken, an order was received from the Lord Chamberlain to ſhut up the houſe.

This done, SWINEY, now manager of the Haymarket, as we have ſeen, for the purpoſe of exhibiting operas only, had his power ſo extended that he was permitted to enter into a treaty with the principal actors in order to form a company under the direction of ſuch of them as ſhould be choſen by a majority of themſelves from their own body; ſo that plays at the Haymarket might again be united with operas.

The managers pitched upon were WILKS, DOGGET, Mrs. OLDFIELD, and CIBBER, which latter, by every collateral proof I can collect, had been the engine all the way through the buſineſs; had ſtimulated BRETT, had foreſeen the folly of RICH

and its consequences, and had felt from the moment he became of any importance to the theatre that he should one day or other be one of its rulers; which every man must consider as a laudable ambition, since his intention had been all along to take care of its proper interest.

Betterton and Booth would certainly have been parties in the treaty; but the first was on the point of leaving the stage, and the other had manifested little more than the dawn of that reputation which was afterwards so brilliant. Indeed Mrs. Oldfield, who was nominated one of the directors, very wisely proposed to receive two hundred a year, which Cibber tells us was at last worth six in lieu of a share, and thus Wilks, Dogget, and Cibber, but in fact Cibber only, for he always administered so to the contradictory tempers of his partners as to be the general referee, became managers of the plays, and Swiney of the operas.

In the mean time, Rich, who had deceived himself with a hope that the prohibition, after due contrition had been manifested and due submission paid, would be taken off, kept together as many of the actors as would stay, and more than he had an inclination to pay. He held the patent and the

broad ſeal was as viſible as ever, and his opinion was, as a lawyer, that it was a ſtretch of the Lord Chamberlain's power beyond its limits to ſilence him at all, for that the quarrel with the actors was a private buſineſs, and that he was only amenable to the courts of law for his conduct.

Thus he was again playing a double game. If permiſſion to perform had been renewed, he had ſome actors ready for his purpoſe, if not, by repreſenting to the patentees the hopeleſs ſituation of the concern, he ſhould naturally get the patent excluſively to himſelf, and poſſeſs that ſupreme power which, whether active or inactive, whether profitable or unprofitable, he had been all his life graſping at. The latter happened. Rich was actually put out of the poſſeſſion of Drury Lane, and the other patentees I have no doubt from that moment to this, never exhibited a ſingle ſympton of laying any further claim to the patent or any of its rights and privileges.

Let us now ſee how Rich happened to be diſpoſſeſſed of his theatre. Having made an agreement with the landlords, not for a given price by the year but for three pounds a day whenever it ſhould be opened as a place of entertainment, and the landlords, during the operation of the prohibition, not

having received a ſingle ſixpence for rent, they began to repent of the ſort of agreement they had entered into, by which a tenant might poſſeſs a large premiſes without being ſubject to pay any rent, and was caſting about in their minds how to ouſt RICH when a circumſtance occurred that completely ſatisfied them.

A faſhionable man, one of the members for CORNWALL, and a lawyer, of the name of COLLIER, had long conſidered the management of a theatre a good ſcheme if it could be diveſted of all thoſe incumbrances under which it had ſo long bent down. This man, who was a good match for RICH, exerted his intereſt at court and procured a licence, for he knew that would anſwer his purpoſe as well as a patent eſtabliſhed by act of Parliament, for acting plays; and, as he knew the licence muſt neceſſarily name the place of performance, he went to the landlords of the Drury Lane theatre, agreed with them upon a larger rent for a leaſe of thoſe premiſes, taking it upon his own riſk to turn RICH out. Having this leaſe and this licence in his pocket, he took the advantage of a rejoicing night, when all was tumult and uproar, ruſhed into the houſe with a hired mob, and forcibly turned its old occupier into the ſtreet.

The novelty of the circumſtance for a time turned the tide of public favour on the ſide of our new adventurers. BOOTH, who had, perhaps, been diſatisfied at not having been admitted into the direction of the Haymarket, headed the actors and certainly began to acquire conſiderable reputation. Miſs SANTLOW alſo, who had been greatly admired as a dancer, now commenced actreſs; and her firſt appearance in the character of the Fair Quaker of Deal, which SHADWELL wrote purpoſely for her, gained her ſo much reputation that, ſays CIBBER, "not the enthuſiaſtic maid of Orleans was more "ſerviceable of old to the French army, when the "Engliſh had diſtreſſed them, than this fair Qua-"ker was, at the head of that dramatic attempt, "upon which the ſupport of their weak ſociety "depended."

Let us now return to RICH. He had taken a leaſe of the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields ever ſince BETTERTON had left it, evidently with a view of preventing his return provided the Haymarket, under VANBRUGH and CONGREVE ſhould have turned out unprofitable; but CIBBER inſiſts that he foreſaw all that would happen, and provided himſelf with an aſylum in caſe of diſtreſs. Certainly all his conduct is equal to this; it having always conduced to his

own ends, at the ſame time that it was incomprehenſible to every body elſe.

Under the influence of this ſort of preſcience, for ſo it turned out, he inſtantly ſet about building this theatre from the ground; and, though he did not live long enough to ſee it opened, his ſon, under the old patent, without any ſolicitation for its reception, but with perfect indifference as to all conſequences, even though it was not given for that theatre, began a new dramatic career which has continued uninterrupted from that hour to this.

The moment CIBBER and his partners got poſſeſſion of their ſituation in the Haymarket, they were determined to adopt every ſpirited idea to deſerve the favour and attention of the town. They altered the conſtruction of the theatre, caſt their plays in a very judicious ſtyle, and began to hope, that by the aſſiſtance of the operas, which had hitherto greatly ſucceeded, the ſtage would become creditable and productive. They were ſoon convinced of their error. The operas which had been a novelty the year before began now to fall off; the cauſe we ſhall ſee hereafter. SACHEVERAL'S trial alſo, which was attended by all the firſt people in the kingdom, and COLLIER'S new expedition, with

the aſſiſtance of Miſs SANTLOW, were alſo drawbacks; and, though they did not actually fail, yet they had little more to rejoice at than their own emancipation from their old tyranny.

SACHEVERAL'S trial over, which finiſhed with the run of the Fair Quaker of Deal, COLLIER began to find that the tide turned in favour of the Haymarket; he, therefore, determined on a new ſcheme, in which, for he was a *bon vivant*, and in other reſpects a favourite with the great, he ſucceeded. This ſcheme was neither more nor leſs than to give up Drury Lane, cloaths, ſcenes, and actors to SWINEY and his partners, and become himſelf the ſole poſſeſſor of the Haymarket and manager of the operas.

To ſhew the extent of COLLIER'S influence this agreement was clogged with two unpleaſant conditions. One was, that, as an excluſive licence for acting plays was held a more profitable thing than one for performing operas, the Drury Lane managers ſhould allow COLLIER two hundred a year, as long as, through his intereſt at court, all other actors ſhould be interdicted, and the other was that on every Wedneſday, the players ſhould be entirely ſilent, in order to give the opera a fairer chance for a full houſe.

It is curious to obſerve how artfully all this was planned. COLLIER from experience began to find that his own knowledge of theatrical matters was inſufficient, and that, change as often as he might, no ſucceſs was to be expected under his management. Thus, when he had ſtipulated for the poſſeſſion of the opera houſe upon ſuch advantageous terms, he had nothing to do but appear to have a reluctance to part with it and he knew he ſhould have plenty of bidders for the ſituation. This happened exactly as he conjectured. AARON HILL ſeemed very deſirous to treat with him; and, after ſome difficulty in adjuſting the terms, it was at length agreed that he ſhould have poſſeſſion of the theatre upon paying COLLIER ſix hundred a year.

To ſhew, however, that he could do what he pleaſed; when, upon finding through HILL's management, that the profits began to be conſiderable, he ſome how or other found out an informality in the agreement, and took the property back to himſelf before the ſeaſon was over; while HILL, who was too wiſe, or too powerleſs, to contend with him, relinquiſhed his right without murmuring.

He was now completely outwitted; for, from the

moment he took the direction again, his affairs went backward; finding therefore, that he ſtood no chance, ſingle handed, of making any public amuſement productive, he determined once more to try the influence of his court intereſt; and, in the moſt bare-faced manner, ſo wrought his project to his ends, that SWINEY by a freſh mandate was obliged to change with COLLIER, and take the Haymarket with all its ſins upon its head; which ſins ſo operated to its damnation, that SWINEY the next year was obliged to prefer the air of the Continent to the air of a priſon.

Nothing could be ſo unpleaſant as the ſituation that CIBBER and his fellow labourers were driven into by this ſtretch of power in COLLIER. He became their taſk maſter, and dictated what terms he thought proper. Knowing, however, by experience that every thing would go wrong if he attempted excluſively to manage the concern, he thought his wiſeſt way would be to accept of a certainty and make a ſinecure of it. He, therefore, demanded ſix hundred a year, the price at which he had farmed out the opera, and a moiety of the two hundred that had been levied in Drury Lane the year before in aid of the opera; in all ſeven hundred pounds. By this, indeed, he loſt three hundred a year, for

the managers averaged more than a thouſand a year each, the whole time he continued at the head of the theatre, which was, however, no longer than the death of the queen in 1714. He did not, after this agreement, for the reaſons we have ſeen, think proper to attempt any alteration, but enjoyed his remuneration and let them work for it.

The theatre for the firſt time now felt ſome conſequence. DOGGET was naturally frugal; WILKS, if he ran into expence, took care it ſhould be for the intereſt of the concern; and CIBBER, who knew that the parſimony of the one would operate as a ſufficient check upon the extravagance of the other, let them fairly have their way; while he himſelf ſtudied continually how he might eſtabliſh decorum, promulgate morality, and in all their money concerns ſo equitably demean themſelves as to ſecure, what no managers had ever before boaſted of, the character of fairneſs and punctuality in their dealings; and it is remarkable that this conduct was ſo honourably perſevered in, during twenty years from the time this triumvirate began to conduct the theatre, that no tradeſman came a ſecond time for his bill, nor was a ſingle author, actor, or other perſon, employed about the houſe at any time refuſed his or her juſt due, even though there never was, which is a ſingular

fact, any one agreement in writing executed between them.

The conduct of the theatre being pretty well ſettled, nothing worthy the attention of the reader paſſed till 1714, except the admiſſion of BOOTH into the management, and DOGGET's ſeceſſion, which came about in conſequence of the reputation BOOTH acquired in performing Cato. This happened in 1712, great part of which, however, though infinite merit is to be attributed to BOOTH, was owing to the popularity of the play; for, at a part of the ſeaſon when it was cuſtomary to perform but three times a week, it had a run for a month together, except on the Mondays.

DOGGET had long been tormented with the fretful temper of WILKS; and, in ſpight of CIBBER's conciliatory manner, who generally ſucceeded in accommodating all difficulties, was at the particular moment when Cato firſt made its appearance, extremely ſore in conſequence of his having introduced actors without the general conſent, and other diſagreeable things. CIBBER, to divert his attention from this, called it to ſomething which he conſidered as much more material than a few partnerſhip bickerings. This was no leſs than a ſuſpicion that

Booth, having grown ſo ſuddenly into fame, would aim at being manager, eſpecially as he had received various marks of favour, and, among the reſt, a purſe of fifty guineas which had been in one evening collected for him in the boxes.

This circumſtance, which really ſo far from being a remuneration ſeems to have been very little more than the halfpence formerly thrown on the ſtage at Sadler's Wells for the rope dancers, Dogget conſidered as a thing of conſequence; and, forgetting for a moment his quarrel to Wilks, propoſed, by way of quelling all ambition in Booth, that the managers ſhould ſpontaneouſly give him an addition of fifty guineas to the ſum already beſtowed on him by the public. Cibber ſaw that ſuch a meaſure would awaken his ambition inſtead of lulling it aſleep; but, finding Wilks cordially coincide with Dogget, he conſented to purchaſe their reconciliation by a means which would at worſt do no more than accelerate what perhaps could not be avoided.

On the return of the company from Oxford, where it had been the cuſtom for them to perform during the act term, and when Booth had gathered freſh laurels, the friends of this gentleman ſuggeſted to him that he had been too long kept out of that

ſituation which he had richly merited. He naturally liſtened to their opinions and accepted the offers of aſſiſtance which followed them up, which were at length ſo efficacious that a new licence was procured, which even Collier could not prevent, where Booth's name was added to the names of the former managers.

Dogget remonſtrated againſt this tooth and nail, but to no purpoſe; till, finding the point carried in ſpight of his teeth he retired from the concern, determined, however, to demand his profits as they ſhould accrue. This was of courſe objected to, and he threw the matter into Chancery; where he was decreed ſix hundred pounds for his ſhare, ſo that he loſt a large ſum; for Booth had handſomely offered on his coming into the concern to give him five hundred a year for life for his profits.

We now come to the acceſſion of George the firſt, when matters completely took a new turn. Cibber, for in all material points he certainly and very properly was the dictator, grown heartily ſick of Collier, conceived a very feaſible means of fairly getting rid of him. He did not value the ſeven hundred a year that he had been paid, becauſe he had ſeen the very great advantage of having their

pretentions backed by a firm friend at court; but the tide of court favour being now completely turned, an idea ſtruck him that he might ſecure a friend highly popular, with ſtrong intereſt and rich ability to be ſerviceable to the theatre itſelf.

This friend was no other than ſir RICHARD STEELE, the ſolicitation of whoſe alliance CIBBER ſaw would procure great popularity for themſelves; for it would be conſidered as a meaſure not only very judicous but very grateful. STEELE had always loved the theatre, he had beſtowed on it ſome of his labours, and he had by his recommendation of the players in his *Tatlers* given them a conſequence that had made them emulous to deſerve the characters of gentlemen, and men of honour and reſpectability. In addition to this, CIBBER, knew STEELE's influence with the duke of MARLBOROUGH, the hero of his heart, as he emphatically calls him, to whom, to be brief, he applied, and a licence was inſtantly made out confirming the power in STEELE, CIBBER, WILKS, and BOOTH, and completely diſpoſſeſſing COLLIER.

In the mean time the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields, opened under the ſon of RICH, the former patentee, who conceived he had a right to exerciſe a patent which king CHARLES had certainly a right

to grant, and which as certainly no equal power had formally revoked. There is ſome account of a private declaration to this effect having been made by the king, but this is doubted; and that the prohibition was officially removed cannot poſſibly be true. It is enough to ſay that it was ſuſpended by a ſtrain of authority, though the meaſure was equitable; and, that authority ceaſing, the patent reſumed its former action.

The ſucceſs of this theatre was not brilliant, yet it was, for a time, ſufficient to check a little the profits of Drury Lane, which induced CIBBER to conſider, that, as the licence he and his partners held was only during pleaſure, and the other a permanent grant from the crown, it would be a proper thing to procure ſome better ſecurity; to do which he repreſented to STEELE what were his ſentiments on the ſubject, and alſo ſubmitted to him as COLLIER's penſion, which he now enjoyed, was given on condition that it ſhould be only payable during the time Drury Lane ſhould perform excluſively, whether it would not be fair, inſtead of granting him a poſitive ſum, to admit him a partner on a proportionable ſhare.

STEELE's anſwer to this propoſition was; that as he came among them by their own invitation, he

ſhould always think himſelf obliged to come into any meaſures for their uſe and ſafety; and, with theſe ſentiments, he not only handſomely acceded to their propoſal, but procured a patent for his own life and three years afterwards, which he aſſigned over to them, and confirmed to them a right in the whole property, on which he had certainly not expended any thing, reſerving to himſelf a fourth of the profits for his intereſt and aſſiſtance.

This generous and moderate conduct of STEELE was rewarded; for, inſtead of ſeven hundred a year during his life, it yielded him a thouſand, except thoſe drawbacks which he had incurred by the neglect of his own affairs, which he managed ſo imprudently that they were almoſt always in truſt; and thus the beſt part of his fortune was continually ſcrambled for by the lawyers.

The grant for this patent having given to Drury Lane a permanent ſecurity, the managers went on very ſpiritedly. They laid out ſix hundred pounds upon DRYDEN'S *All for Love*, and got up other pieces with equal ſplendour; till every art was practiſed by their enemies, and, among other things, a report was propagated that the foundation of the theatre was

unſafe, and that the building would certainly fall upon the heads of the audience. This calumny only fell, however, on the heads of the calumniators, for ſir THOMAS HEWET, having ſurveyed it by an order from the king, and ſigned an atteſtation, which was printed in the newſpapers, that it was perfectly ſafe and in ſound condition, the ſpectators, who had kept away during the alarm, now came in much greater numbers.

Theſe fortunate circumſtances, together with the unremitting induſtry of the managers, gained them ſo decided a ſuperiority over their opponents in Lincoln's Inn Fields that theſe laſt were ſoon obliged to call in foreign aid, and this gave birth to thoſe pantomimes, which RICH brought forward with ſuch wonderful ſucceſs, and which have given riſe, or at leaſt efficacioufly revived, thoſe ſpectacles which have ſo often diſgraced and vitiated the national taſte*.

* It is curious that FIELDING and CIBBER, who heartily hated each other, and who thought differently on every other ſubject, ſhould completely coincide on this. FIELDING wrote a very ſenſible treatiſe to ſhew that the encreaſe of robberies in this kingdom was entirely owing to the gin ſhops, where the poor people ſo intoxicated their ſenſes as to make them ripe for all manner of vice. In conſequence of this treatiſe, and ſome other repreſentations, an act paſſed to put down thoſe nuiſances. CIBBER in like manner calls theſe

As the reſpectability with which Drury Lane was conducted, and the ſhew and finery introduced at Lincoln's Inns Fields, attracted their ſeparate admirers to ſuch a degree as to be productive to both theatres, very little happened for many years, except a few ſtruggles, the particulars of which, though in ſome degree curious, it will be impoſſible to enumerate here, to obſtruct that mutual emulation which though not always creditable, generally brought with it a proportionable profit.

As, however, the chapter of numbers does not by any means include the judicious, RICH, in progreſs of time, carried the greateſt number of votes, and CIBBER was, at length, with great reluctance it muſt be confeſſed, obliged to ſail with the ſtream, and to ſtrengthen the reputation of SHAKESPEAR, by the magic power of Harlequin. Being aſked why he did this, he anſwered, he did it againſt his conſcience, but that he had not virtue enough to ſtarve by oppoſing a multitude that would have been too hard for him.

ſpectacles the gin ſhops of the ſtage, which intoxicate its auditors, diſhonour their underſtandings, and introduce a levity that renders them ripe for every kind of profligacy. Pity that the morals of the more enlightened were not as worthy the attention of the legiſlature as thoſe of the vulgar. The avenues of the theatres would then, perhaps, leſs reſemble brothels.

In this manner did the two theatres perſevere in their different efforts till the death of ſir RICHARD STEELE, which happened in 1729, for their private diſputes never effected their public intereſt. As to RICH, he was remarkably fortunate, which is not very wonderful when we conſider he had all the fools on his ſide, but he was the vaineſt and perhaps the moſt ignorant of all human beings, and therefore it will not be wondered at, that, as he drew all his fortune from foreign auxiliaries they ſhould have both cunning and knavery enough to draw it from him. In ſhort he was always ſucceſsful and always poor, and would, perhaps, have been obliged to put the patent, which his father had been at ſuch unwearied and ſuch very honeſt pains to reſerve for him, to who bids moſt, if *The Beggar's Opera* had not licked him whole.

The only interruption the harmony of the Drury Lane partnerſhip experienced was the abſence of STEELE, in 1720, when his affairs were become ſo diſtracted that he grew careleſs of all engagements. There has been another interruption mentioned which I cannot find the ſmalleſt ground for crediting. We read that CIBBER having ſomehow offended the duke of NEWCASTLE, in the year 1720, he not only forbad him to perform but that, being after-

wards offended by STEELE, he actually ſilenced the patent; but by a remonſtrance, or ſome other way, it was amicably adjuſted, though the only reporter of this anecdote does not know what way.

All I have to offer in oppoſition to this relation is that I cannot find the ſmalleſt trace of this circumſtance either in the lives of STEELE or CIBBER, not even in the accounts of them written by the author of the above aſſertion. The theatre was certainly never ſilenced; and, as to CIBBER's having diſobliged the duke of NEWCASTLE, he ſpeaks of that nobleman in terms of the higheſt reſpect, and inſtances a circumſtance of ſelf denial, and diſintereſtedneſs, as a proof of his attention to the managers, and a motive of their gratitude to him. I take the fact to be, that, as STEELE oppoſed the peerage bill in the Houſe of Commons, and conſequently grew out of court favour, and as he gained that favour in a ſtronger degree than ever by his ſpirited ſtrictures againſt the miſchievous South Sea ſcheme, the miſtake has ariſen from a ſuppoſition that the theatre as well as the office he held was during that interval ſuſpended, but this is impoſſible; for, to make it out, the theatre muſt have been ſhut up for three years, whereas no mention is made, except by this author, of its having ſtopt for a ſingle day.

The interruption I am going to mention was not of a public nature, therefore it includes no ſuſpenſion of the theatre. STEELE, whoſe affairs, the larger his fortune, were ever the more perplexed, had, about 1723, ſo got into the hands of the lawyers that every thing was in various ways made over in truſt. In conſequence of this the theatre, which had derived great advantage from his attendance and aſſiſtance, beſides the countenance he was enabled to procure it through the means of his faſhionable connections, was like every thing elſe neglected. CIBBER, who had born this quietly for three years, was anxious to recal him both to his duty and a due attention to his own concerns, and therefore, as there was no getting at him otherwiſe than officially, "for," ſays he, "being in the clutches of the lawyers, "the friend or the gentleman had nothing more to "do in the matter," ſerved him with a ſort of notice that as he had thought proper to abſent himſelf from the concerns, which by the articles of partnerſhip he was equally bound to attend to with the reſt, they ſhould expect to be paid for the trouble of doing his buſineſs, and therefore ſhould charge him one pound, thirteen ſhillings, and four pence a day for their extra trouble. This was a good handle for his law friends, who having his affairs completely in their management, threw the matter immediately into Chancery.

This affair came to a hearing before sir JOSEPH JEKYLL, the Master of the Rolls, in 1726. CIBBER pleaded in behalf of himself, BOOTH, and WILKS, and it must be confessed his observations were not more fair and manly than they were handsome and friendly towards STEELE, even though the attornies in drawing the bill had foisted in some paltry things which reminded the other partners under what obligations they were to him from his public writings in the *Tatlers*, and other things, which by the way had been the original source of their gratitude, and occasioned his being called in to make one in the management of the theatre. In short, CIBBER pleaded so effectually, that his prayer was allowed without the trouble and expence of a hearing before the Lord Chancellor, "and the parties were "heartily glad," says he, "to let this be the last of "their law suits."

It should seem as if the fate of the *Beggar's Opera*, which was said to make RICH gay, and GAY rich, was to decide the fate of Drury-Lane. It came out in 1728, and from that hour the other theatre went gradually to its dissolution, I mean as to reputation, which was never revived again till GARRICK took the management. In 1729, STEELE died. Mrs. OLDFIELD died in 1730, BOOTH was

rendered incapable of performing by his illneſs, Mrs. PORTER was loſt to the theatre by the diſlocation of a limb, and in 1731, death took off WILKS.

The following year, the term for which the patent had been granted expired, and CIBBER found no difficulty in getting it renewed for twenty-one years in behalf of BOOTH, Mrs. WILKS, and himſelf. BOOTH immediately reſolved to part with what he could of his ſhare, and, finding a purchaſer in a gentleman of the name of HIGHMORE, who unfortunately had attached himſelf to the ſtage from having performed Lothario for his amuſement, this adventurer entered into his views and gave him for the poſſeſſion of half his proportion two thouſand five hundred pounds.

CIBBER began now to think what would be his moſt politic line of conduct. Beſides this Mr. HIGHMORE, who knew nothing of managing, Mrs. WILKS had put in a Mr. ELLIS to act, or rather to manage for her, who was ſtill leſs qualified for the taſk; and, if CIBBER had found it difficult to pilot the theatrical bark through all the breezes that had been raiſed by WILKS and DOGGET, who were after all expert mariners, what muſt have been his trouble

and danger to have the ſame taſk to perform in worſe weather, aſſiſted only by thoſe who, ſo far from being able to ſteer, ſcarcely knew the conſtruction of the veſſel in which they were embarked.

Thus ſituated he determined upon getting rid of the concern as ſoon as poſſible, and therefore deputed his ſon THEOPHILUS, who he knew would be a complete torment to them, to act for him; and his foreſight was ſo correct that HIGHMORE, at the end of the ſeaſon, came to him with an offer of three thouſand guineas for his ſhare, which was only ſix hundred and twenty-five pounds more than he had paid BOOTH for half of his. CIBBER, however, was determined, as he tells us, to let it go to the higheſt bidder, and, therefore, cloſed with the propoſal.

One reaſon for this, perhaps, was the ruinous ſtate into which the theatre was likely to be plunged; which, having ſeen, he perſuaded Mrs. BOOTH, her huſband being now dead, to get rid of the remainder of her ſhare, with which ſhe parted upon low terms to GIFFARD. As to Mrs. WILKS ſhe was glad enough to take what ſhe could get for her proportion when FLEETWOOD came afterwards to purchaſe the

property, the particulars of which we ſhall preſently ſee.

HIGHMORE's affairs began to wear a very alarming aſpect. In the year 1720, a man of the name of POTTER, a carpenter, merely to pleaſe his fancy, for it is difficult to ſay, unleſs he was inſpired with ſome of old RICH's preſcience, upon what other ſpeculation he could carry ſo expenſive a plan into effect, built a theatre in the Haymarket. This theatre had remained unoccupied thirteen years, when it ſtruck young CIBBER, that if he could perſuade ſome of the actors to revolt, they might at leaſt get a temporary ſum by bringing forward ſome novelty at this place. The performers he founded upon this ſubject reliſhed the ſcheme, they inſtantly applied to POTTER, who was glad enough to turn to advantage a property that had lain ſo long upon his hands, and in a very ſhort time, without the ſmalleſt authority, opened this houſe with the comedy of *Love for Love*, in imitation of BETTERTON and his adventurers formerly in Lincoln's Inns Fields.

At firſt HIGHMORE did not regard this, but opened Drury Lane at the uſual time. When, however, he found he could make no ſtand againſt his principal actors who had now deſerted him, not

even with his own performance of Lothario, his hopeleſs condition ſtared him in the face. He inſtantly, therefore, applied to the Lord Chamberlain, and employed proper perſons to put in force the laws againſt vagrants, but, by cunning and evaſion, they contrived to hold out ſo long; that, having but little perſonal intereſt, and very ſoon as little perſonal property, he was glad enough to give up the contention, heartily wiſhing he had never vainly conceived himſelf qualified to perform Lothario.

The ragged fortune of this manager was taken up by the more ragged fortune of the next, who's name was FLEETWOOD. He certainly got hold of the property at a much lower rate than any of his predeceſſors, but which property ſunk him into more ruin, which was needleſs, than ever. It is ſuppoſed that he paid not more than two thouſand pounds for the whole property; but whatever it was, it is allowed on all hands it not only ſtript him of his laſt guinea but left him conſiderably in debt.

It had one good effect however. The revolters had by this time enough of their frolic, and FLEETWOOD, being perfectly a gentleman and a convivial character, they returned to their old quarters. With

CIBBER, however, all idea of real management had left the theatre; beſides a ſpirit of dramatic enterprize began now to be the rage. In 1729, a man of the name of ODELL had built a theatre in Goodman's Fields, which was attacked by the citizens, and preached againſt by the clergy, under the idea that it would be productive of miſchief ſo near to the ſeat of commerce. He opened it nevertheleſs, but was under the neceſſity in a ſhort time of ſhutting it, though his ſucceſs had been very promiſing.

At this time, however, GIFFARD, who had got rid of his ſmall ſhare in Drury Lane, ſolicited a ſubſcription for another theatre in Goodman's Fields, and actually opened it in 1732. RICH too, who was alſo determined to enterprize, was at this time building Covent Garden theatre, which opened, for the firſt time in 1733. GIFFARD ſoon after, finding his Goodman's Fields ſcheme unproductive, was adviſed to repair to the vacant houſe in Lincoln's Inn Fields, that RICH had abandoned, and he opened it in 1735, and actually without any authority, unleſs there was a convention between him and RICH for the uſe of the dormant patent, which has been no bad ſtalking horſe at times, performed there for two years.

Thus in proportion as theatrical abilities decreaſed, theatres became more numerous. Covent Garden, however, with RICH and his pantomimes decidedly carried every thing before them. FLEETWOOD, who was one of thoſe prodigies in life which people gaze at but cannot underſtand, who without a viſible ſixpence of his own continued to laviſh away thouſands, buſtled on with Drury Lane for more than ten years, during all which time the theatre continued in every diſtreſs, and laboured under every inconvenience; but what renders the circumſtance ſo extraordinary as to be ſcarcely credible is that though authors, actors, dancers, nay carpenters, ſcene ſhifters, dreſſers, fire lighters, and the whole theatrical train which CIBBER enumerated in his ſpeech before the Maſter of the Rolls to the tune of a hundred and forty, beſides the long liſt of ſupernumeraries, ſcarcely gleaned from the profits money ſufficient to ſuſtain exiſtence, while their profligate manager was figuring away and enjoying every luxury in the company of ſome of the firſt people in the kingdom.

There muſt have been ſomething peculiarly facinating in this man. To be individually indebted to all the members of his theatre, to treat them at the ſame time with as much hauteur and contempt as if they

had been his ſlaves, and contrive to make them ſubmit to all this inconvenience and contumely, not only without murmuring but with chearfulneſs, is a trait of inſolent preſumption on one ſide, and of tame ſubmiſſion on the other, ſo unaccountable, that it is impoſſible to find a motive for it. Had there been any proſpect of amendment in their fortune, had this manager in any one ſingle inſtance kept his word, or had they, in ſhort, any thing like a glimpſe of hope, from inclination, if not from ability, to receive the ſmalleſt juſtice at his hands, it would have been ſomething; but to go on earning for him the bread he eat, or rather laviſhed upon others, to witneſs every day his accumulated inconveniencies, arreſts, executions, and all the horrors of legal proſecution, and yet remain inſenſible to the diſtreſſes of themſelves and their families, and ſtill go on, would exceed credibility if we did not know that in this ſtatement there is not the leaſt exaggeration *.

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* The old ſtory is very well known about Wood the treaſurer. One Saturday morning when the actors were kicking their heels at the door of the treaſury, where they had attended in vain on the ſame day for many weeks, one of their companions came out with a diſcontented countenance. "Well," ſaid another, "I ſuppoſe "there's no cole to be had this morning." "Not a doit," ſays the firſt. "Well then," ſaid one of them dryly, "if there's no "cole, we muſt burn Wood." But a friend of mine ſpeaking of

This was the time for adventurers to take the advantage of the folly of Covent Garden, and the diſtraction of Drury Lane. Nothing of this kind, however, would probably have been very formidable if the celebrated HENRY FIELDING, who became tremblingly alive to a great variety of real or imaginary injuries both from the great and theatrical managers, had not thruſt himſelf forward and got together a ſet of performers. He called them the Great Mogul's Company, and brought out *ad libitum* pieces at the theatre in the Haymarket.

The firſt performance was called *Paſquin*, which was aſtoniſhingly followed for upwards of fifty nights. The piece itſelf we ſhall by and by examine. It was a bold, and certainly an unwarrantable ſatire. This was followed by the *Hiſtorical Regiſter*, written in the ſame ſtyle of invective. Theſe pieces were not immediately ſtopped, but they were conſidered of ſuch a tendency as to demand an interference of the legiſlature; for which purpoſe, as the hiſtory is, a performance, full of the

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FLEETWOOD very highly extolled his ingenuity and compared him to MOSES, who kept ſo many people ſtarving in the wilderneſs, and yet contented. "I grant you," ſaid another, "he has the inge-" nuity of MOSES, 'tis a pity he has not his honeſty; for, when the " manna came, MOSES liberally gave his companions their full ſhare."

ſame perſonal ſatire againſt the great, was anonymouſly ſent to GIFFARD, who had at that time returned to Goodman's Fields, with a private intimation, however, that he ſhould refuſe to perform it, and give it up into the hands of government as a thing improper to bring before the public.

This piece was called The *Golden Rump*, and ſome think it was a ſcheme of GIFFARD and his friends to procure favour, and perhaps a gratuity. Both theſe conſequences happened, for GIFFARD received a handſome ſum, and was highly applauded for his conſtitutional conduct; and, upon this ground, a bill was immediately brought into Parliament; the preſent exiſting bill; which limits the number of theatres, and obliges all managers to ſubmit the copies of every thing dramatic to the inſpection of a licencer.

As many have taken the liberty of cenſuring this meaſure, conſcious, probably, that their own writings could not ſtand a teſt which would weed them of licentiouſneſs and immorality, it is a proper thing here to ſhew that there was nothing novel in this proceeding, but the manner of its being regulated into a poſitive law. Thoſe who have looked over this hiſtory will ſee that the power of the Lord

Chamberlain had always at leaſt this operation, and Stow entered into it ſo much with the ſame ſpirit, and the ſame underſtanding of the ſubject, that nothing new could, during the contention, or can now, be offered to alter the queſtion, or to refute the propriety of the meaſure.

My Lord Chesterfield, that public moralizer and private advocate for every thing wicked and profligate, certainly ſpoke againſt the queſtion; and with all the flimzy ſpeciouſneſs with which it was his cuſtom to gloſs over rotten arguments, affected to tremble at the blow about to be given to our liberties through an act meant to reſtrain authors and actors within thoſe limits which, were they not obſerved, would be a diſgrace to them and to ſociety. Licentiouſneſs and its concommitant, ſedition, are the bane of literature in this country, and no honeſt writer will ever murmur at their being kept within their proper bounds.

No man in his ſenſes can deny that the meaſure was perfectly neceſſary. If it was conſidered as a ſtretch of power, at different periods, to ſuſpend the theatre for a time on account of impropriety of conduct in authors, actors, or managers, it became high time for that power to be regulated and receive a le-

gal ſanction. The exerciſe of the power according to circumſtances had never been altered nor diſputed. The *Maid's Tragedy*, *Lucius Junius Brutus*, DRYDEN's Prologue to the *Propheteſs*, *Mary Queen of Scots*, and a variety of other things had been refuſed licences. This is a proof that licences were aſked for, and that this was uſual, otherwiſe they could not have been refuſed. All, therefore, that was now done went no farther than to conſolidate a wholeſome cuſtom ſanctioned by ſeveral local laws into one effectual law; the fact remained exactly as before. The conduct of the Lord Chamberlain, which craſty men choſe, prior to this act, to repreſent as undefinable, was now preciſely fixed and ſettled, and in ſuch a way that no perſon could from that time affect to miſunderſtand it.

Nothing can prove this more clearly than the fact already hinted at, of TONY ASTON's having been admitted to ſpeak upon a ſimilar act, which had been moved for, two years earlier, before FIELDING brought out *Paſquin*; and this ſhews, by the way, that the miniſtry wanted no ſuch ſtimulus as *Paſquin*, or The *Hiſtorical Regiſter*, or The *Golden Rump*; and that it was the opening of the theatre in the Haymarket and that in Goodman's Fields, in defiance of all law, that was conſidered as the offence rather than any ſtrictures on his perſonal conduct.

The fact is, grievanees had always exiſted; we ſee them in this hiſtory frequently and variouſly enumerated, and an attempt to get rid of them, and to ſhew the public at once, and the different members of theatres, the proper regulations on which they either could or ought to be carried on, was as much a compliment to thoſe intereſted in them. as it was a meaſure due to the dignity of the law. The difficult lay in conſtructing ſuch an act as ſhould be ſhielded from all miſconſtruction, and this they had not properly conſidered in the firſt act they brought in; which, as we have ſeen, was got rid of through the arguments of TONY ASTON, and this is a ſtrong proof how deſirous the miniſtry were of not infringing upon eſtabliſhed uſage.

This man was bred a lawyer, and the ſtudy of his life had been to watch thoſe laws concerning theatres, and for the moſt natural reaſon in the world. He was himſelf a vagrant, and was perpetually ſetting the laws at defiance. His honeſt expoſition, therefore, of the manner in which he had evaded them was the beſt leſſon that could be how to frame ſuch a law as no man could poſſibly evade. This he convinced them they had not been able to do, for he pointed out ſo many loop holes in the bill they brought in, that they took it back and two years afterwards paſſed this in queſtion; which, through

thoſe hints, and upon mature conſideration they conceived liable to no further objection.

In this they were perfectly right, for nothing but cavil has been levelled againſt it, and this ſhews that TONY ASHTON was a better, or leaſt an honeſter, parliamentary ſpeaker than Lord CHESTERFIELD; for TONY, having evaded the law, fairly ſhewed in what manner he had done ſo, and acknowledged the new act as a ſalutary meaſure, to preſent evaſion in others; while my Lord ſhirked the queſtion, and affected to lament future conſequences that could have no poſſible operation, for fear, perhaps, the licentiouſneſs of writers ſhould receive wholeſome reſtraint.

As there had been nothing like management ſince CIBBER, RICH alone through his foreign levies was ſucceſsful. The reſt, branching into different factions became weakened and irregular. We have ſeen GIFFARD open and ſhut his theatre in Goodman's Fields as he was impelled by difference of fortune, and we have ſeen FIELDING oppoſe theatres, and miniſters, with the greateſt ſucceſs for one ſeaſon, and ſink into nothing the year following. FLEETWOOD, who with all his companionable qualities, and adroitneſs in pocketing the receipts of the houſe, would have found them ſo unproductive as to have

had nothing to pocket, had he not called in aſſiſtance as to the management.

The theatre would not have bettered its ſucceſs however by this ſtep, had not MACKLIN been choſen one of the aſſiſtants; who paid the ſame attention to the real intereſt of the concern as his coadjutor young CIBBER did to the flippery and decorations; and, though no material advantage immediately accrued from his judgment in the ſelection of proper performers, yet it begat a ſort of dawn or promiſe of another era, likely to be as pre-eminently great as that in which the ſtage had been ſupported by thoſe actors whoſe abſence the town now very juſtly and very ſincerely regretted.

QUIN began now to be known, and MILWARD; and Mrs. CIBBER, who had been a favourite ſinger, all of a ſudden aſtoniſhed the public by her admirable performance of Zara. And now the licening act being paſſed, and theatrical merit confined to one point, many candidates for public favour made their appearance; till, at length, to ſanction their labours and confirm their reputation, the world were aſtoniſhed and delighted with a new and extraordinary object of theatrical excellence, in GARRICK.

CHAP. XII.

ACTORS.

EVERY thing that relates to genius and mental intelligence, is both aſcertained and improved by compariſon. Thus authors and actors have ſucceeded beſt when they have appeared in cluſters. We ſay the wits of ELIZABETH, and the wits of CHARLES the ſecond, and upon the ſame principle, juſt as we now lament that there remain very few members of the ſchool of GARRICK, ſo in CIBBER's time, at leaſt after 1708, they began to deplore the decline of the ſchool of BETTERTON.

We have ſeen already that acting, after that great man, relaxed as a repreſentation of nature, and that WILKS and CIBBER, who were not gifted actors, intuitive utterers of paſſion and ſenſibility, ſupplied theſe requiſites by ſound judgment, and ſtrong diſcernment.

WILKS was an Iriſhman, and had never dreamt

of being an actor, but had drudged on in the Secretary of State's office, till ſome private perſons gave a play gratis. The play was *Othello*, and WILKS acted the Moor; from which moment, though he was conſcious how many diſadvantages he had to ſtruggle with, he determined to quit his ſituation, by which his ſucceſſor acquired a fortune of fifty thouſand pounds, and attach himſelf wholly to the ſtage.

With a view of getting at once into fame, he came to ENGLAND, but, being neglected for a conſiderable time, he could not brook like CIBBER this inaction, and contumely, and, therefore, returned to DUBLIN, where having gained experience, he once more came to ENGLAND, and, an opportunity being now open to him, by poor MONTFORD's unfortunate death, of trying his fortune, he began ſoon to be received by the public as a very ſenſible if not a very excellent actor. I have ſhewn how completely he overpowered POWELL merely by diligence and attention *. But I muſt confine myſelf to WILKS as an actor.

* CIBBER tells us that WILKS conſidered this diligence as ſo indiſpenſible a duty to the public, that he ſeemed to love it as good men do virtue for its own ſake; for that he has known him ſwallow a volume of froth and inſipidity in a new play, which had no merit

Wilks ſeems to have had many radical imperfections, like Cibber, which he was obliged to ſoften, and conceal by various arts. Theſe arts at laſt became a ſtandard, and have ever ſince been reſorted to by all thoſe whoſe merit, as actors have been derived from information, underſtanding, and a ſtrong comprehenſion of the paſſions and their motives; but to whom nature has denied either perſon or voice, or ſome other of thoſe prominent requiſites without which an actor, with the beſt conception, muſt have to ſtruggle againſt the ſtream; juſt as Churchill complains that O'Brien croaked becauſe Woodward had croaked before, and thus we find Ryan, Havard, and even the erudite and valuable She-

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but being recommended by a perſon of quality, and would not live three nights. He gives among ſeveral inſtances of Wilks's extraordinary patience in this way, the following example.

In ſome new comedy, he happened to complain of a crabbed "ſpeech in his part, which", he ſaid, "gave him more trouble to "ſtudy, than all the reſt of it had done; upon which, he applied to "the author, either to ſoften, or ſhorten it. The author, that he "might make the matter quite eaſy to him, fairly cut it all out. "But when he got home, from the rehearſal, Wilks thought it ſuch "an indignity to his memory that any thing ſhould be thought too "hard for it, that he actually made himſelf perfect in that ſpeech, "though he knew it was never to be made uſe of. From this "ſingular act of ſupererogation, you may judge, how indefatigable "the labour of his memory muſt have been, when his profit and "honour were more concerned to make uſe of it."

RIDAN, all manneriſts in this way who were obliged in the abſence of thoſe primary and eſſential qualities to ſubſtitute ſyſtem for nature.

WILKS, in this way, is repreſented as having an inharmonious voice, which obliged him, when he gave a looſe to that ſpirit which he poſſeſſed in an uncommon degree, to cut his accents ſhort and render that riſible that ought to have been ſolemn, and mimickry which was intended for humour. All this, however, he ſo corrected and took ſuch indefatigable pains to conquer, that, as it gradually reduced and the public became gradually acquainted with it, he was at laſt conſidered as a perfect actor. and it was agreed, by the time his friend FARQUHAR wrote *Sir Harry Wildair*, that acting had never been ſuperior to WILKS; forgetting that cuſtom will vitiate the public underſtanding, and make that appear at one time delectable, that at another would have been only endurable; which is only ſaying, of the period of which we are now ſpeaking, that, at the time of BETTERTON, acting was far ſuperior to what it was in the time of CIBBER, and, in the time of GARRICK, to what it is at the preſent day.

To ſhew, however, that it is extremely difficult to diſtinguiſh real merit, and a correct taſte in the

public to reliſh and reward it, and that the vernacular excellence in acting, which ſeems to run in veins as the different ſtrata in mines, was yet known and practiſed, it had certainly deſcended from BETTERTON to BOOTH. When Sir RICHARD STEELE read a part of *Cato* to CIBBER, ſeven years before it was acted, and when BOOTH was about nineteen, "Good GOD," exclaimed he, "what a part would "BETTERTON have made of Cato!" BOOTH, who had paid every attention both privately and publicly to the inſtructions of BETTERTON, made a fortune by this very part.

This actor, added to the great natural requiſites of a fine perſon, a good voice, and a graceful and dignified deportment, the advantages derived from a ſound underſtanding, and a claſſical education. His ſtyle of acting was altogether tragedy, in which, however, he is ſaid to have in ſome degree cramped nature by lacing the buſkin too tight. This, however, only appeared upon a compariſon with BETTERTON, for BOOTH had ſtrong ſterling merit, and no doubt contributed a great deal towards keeping the more dignified parts of the drama in that eſtimable reſpect which conſtitutes its beſt reputation.

DOGGET, as we are informed from good and impartial authority, was the moſt original and the ſtricteſt

obſerver of nature of all the actors then living. He was ridiculous without impropriety, he had a different look for every different kind of humour, and, though he was an excellent mimic, he imitated nothing but nature. In comic ſongs and dances he was admirable; and, if the deſcription of his performance of Ben in *Love for Love* be correct, that part has certainly never been performed ſince to any degree of perfection. He was a great obſerver of nature, and particularly delighted at catching the manners in low life, as CONGREVE is ſaid to have gone to Wapping to write *Ben*, GAY to Newgate to furniſh his *Beggar's Opera*, or as SWIFT uſed to liſten for hours to the low Iriſh; but, with all this, the acting of DOGGET was ſo chaſte, and his manners in private life ſo well bred, that, though he never choſe to be the actor any where but on the ſtage, yet his company was warmly ſought after by perſons of rank and taſte.

ESTCOURT, who was born at Tewkſbury, had from his infancy a taſte for acting, and particularly mimickry. At fifteen he ran away from his friends and was caught by his father in the very act of performing Roxana at Worceſter. He was ſo dreadfully alarmed that he borrowed ſome cloaths of one of the itinerent ladies and inſtantly left Alexander to

his fate; nor did he ſtop till he reached Chipping Norton; where, beds being ſcarce, he was obliged to take up with that of the daughter at the inn. who undertook to ſit up; but, finding herſelf ſleepy, and not conceiving there would be any poſſible harm in going to bed to one of her own ſex, was on the point of viſiting ESTCOURT, who was faſt aſleep, had ſhe not by ſome means diſcovered her error.

The poor comedian was now taken for a thief, and upon the point of being conveyed to a horſe pond, when a perſon from his father, who had enquired his track, entered the houſe, ſatisfied the landlord, and conveyed the young gentleman home.

He was now bound apprentice, but nothing could hold him, and he took a ſpeedy opportunity of going to Ireland, where he was received on the ſtage, and ſoon made a conſiderable progreſs. CIBBER ſays he was ſo amazing and extraordinary a mimic, that no man nor woman, from the coquette to the privy councellor, ever moved or ſpoke before him, that he could not carry their voice, look. mein, and motion, inſtantly into another company, But this, however, was the boundary of his merit; and though he is ſaid to have on the part of Falſtaff written notes and obſervations upon every

ſpeech, deſcribing the true ſpirit of the humour, and the tone, look, and geſture with which it ought to be delivered; yet, when he came on the ſtage, there was a flatneſs and an inſipidity, in his acting that ſhewed he could greatly conceive, but had not the power to execute. Great mimics, however, are never great actors, and the reaſon is obvious as daylight. Mimicry is an imitation of particular men, and, therefore, vapid and full of pecularity. Acting is an imitation of all mankind, and, therefore, intereſting and full of nature; or, in other words, nothing is ſo erroneous as to hit manners through men, whereas nothing is ſo ſure as to hit men through manners.

Estcourt, however, was as great a character, with the golden gridiron round his neck at the Beef Steak Club, as he was inſignificant, conſidering his general talents, on the ſtage, and that he was humane, poliſhed, and witty, Steele has given a moſt friendly and eloquent certificate, by his charming and manly eulogium of this popular favourite in the *Tatler*.

Norris, whoſe mother was the earlieſt Engliſh actreſs, and who we have already known by the title of Jubilee Dicky, muſt have been as well as Nokes

an actor like WESTON. Unconcious himſelf that he did any thing more than utter his audiences were conſtantly in a roar. In all characters of inveterate ſimplicity, he was exactly what he repreſented; but we are told he ſeemed moſt particularly formed to repreſent a cuckold. CIBBER once performed Barnaby Brittle and aſked Mrs. OLDFIELD, who acted the wife, how ſhe liked him. "Not half ſo well as NORRIS," ſaid ſhe, "he looks "ten times more like a cuckold than you do."

Beſides theſe, a large number might be enumerated and every one entitled to ſome particular praiſe. KEEN was a very reſpectable actor, ſo was MILWARD; GRIFFITH has claims to commendation, ſo had BROWN, ſo had CROSS, ſo had TREFUSIS, which laſt was the original Sir SAMPSON LEGEND. The elder and younger MILLS, and many others, which the dramatis perſonæ of the tragedies and comedies then brought out, will diſtinguiſh, and many on whom I ſhall further enlarge hereafter, ſuch as QUIN and RYAN, had at that time ſtarted on the theatrical courſe and began a very creditable career, but at beſt they cannot, whatever was their diligence, their propriety, their proper attention to the pleaſure of the public, and their own reputation, ſtand againſt the galaxy of talents compoſed by BETTERTON and his ſatelites.

All thefe remarks, with very little exception, apply to the females. Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Porter, and others were imitators of Mrs. Barry, Mrs. Betterton, and the reſt. It would be injuſtice, however, not to mention Mrs. Oldfield who was a wonderful acquiſition to the theatre, and in particular, becauſe her talents were ſo diverſified.

This actreſs ſeems to have poſſeſſed ſome portion of every requiſite that characterized the merit of the old ſchool. Her performance embraced almoſt every deſcription of tragedy and comedy. She, like moſt of the female performers who have arrived to great excellence, continued for a time unheeded. Farquhar who heard her by accident reading a play expreſſed great aſtoniſhment at the propriety with which ſhe intereſted his feelings, and pronounced her formed by nature for an actreſs, which opinion was ſtrongly confirmed when he found her in the bloom of youth, and full of grace, elegance and beauty.

Wilks, Farquhar's particular friend, was then in Ireland; he, however, recommended her in very warm terms to Vanbrugh, who engaged her; but it was not till after ſhe had performed three or four parts that the town, or the performers

perceived in her ſymtoms of extraordinary merit. CIBBER himſelf, who was certainly not only a conſummate judge, but who was of courſe catching at every opportunity to embelliſh his own plays with the beſt talents the theatre had to boaſt, confeſſes he thought very little of her till ſhe performed Leonora in *Sir Courtly Nice*, a character after all not very advantageous to the performer. He ſays that even in that, when ſhe rehearſed with him, he had but a poor opinion of her, but having opportunity of paying her attention, her ſcenes lying almoſt entirely with him, ſhe not only ſurprized him in her own acting, but animated him into a ſtyle of acting himſelf that both delighted and aſtoniſhed him.

In conſequence of this he determined to finiſh The *Careleſs Huſband*, which had lain by ſome time for want of a Lady Betty Modiſh, and he was afterwards proud to own that the great and extraordinary ſucceſs that piece met with was principally owing to this admirable actreſs. It was very handſome and very honourable to pay this tribute to her public merit; but, having through this diſcovery found out alſo that her private worth and accompliſhments were as great and extraordinary, he takes an honourable pleaſure in adding that he has ſeen her in private ſocieties where people of the firſt rank and diſtinction,

might have borrowed her manners, her underſtanding, and her deportment, to their infinite advantage and edification.

With this excellent performer, however, diſappeared all that was admirable in acting; nor did it appear again to any degree of ſplendour, till GARRICK led that genius, which now began to dawn indeed, but, which wanted his genial co-operation to burſt into any thing like expanſion.

CHAP. XI.

IRISH STAGE.

MANY and very ſufficient authorities may be quoted to prove that in IRELAND as in ENGLAND the dramatic art was known very early. Every ancient and noble family had its bard, the kings had their poet laureats, and theſe poets were held for their wiſdom and genius in ſuch high eſtimation that they occupied ſeats in the triennial councils, as the following tranſlation from the original Iriſh will prove.

The King was ſeated on a royal throne,
And on his face majeſtic greatneſs ſhone.
Around him, ſummoned by his ſtrict command,
The peers, the prieſts, the commons of the land,
The bards, or poets, are allowed a place,
And men of learning the aſſembly grace.

And, further on, we are told what was the employment of a poet.

Poets are to applaud, or boldly blame,
And juſtly to give infamy, or fame.

For without them, the brighteſt laurels fade,
And daring vice is in oblivion laid.

And thus we have the principles of the Grecian drama adopted in IRELAND long before the incurſions of the Danes*. Plays were acted at the Caſtle

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* But it is aſtoniſhing to what a remote period we may carry back Iriſh learning if hiſtory is to be credited. The Iriſh Hiſtory informs us, that Prince GADELUS, of the Mileſian race, in his travels viſited PHARAOH, king of EGYPT, fell in love with SCOTA, the king's daughter, and married her. This GADELUS, or GADDEL, for the royal records of TARAH call him by both names, in EGYPT was ſtung by a ſerpent as he lay aſleep, and was healed by the prophet MOSES. The Iriſh is thus elegantly tranſlated by a native bard.

The hiſſing ſerpent, eager for his prey,
Aſcends the couch where ſleeping GADEL lay:
In winding mazes there himſelf he roll'd,
And leap'd upon him with a dreadful fold,
And ſhook his forked tongue, and then around
His neck he twiſts, and gave a deadly wound.
The ſubtle poiſon ſpreads thro' ev'ry vein;
No art, no juice of herbs, can eaſe the pain;
Till MOSES, with his never-failing wand,
Touch'd the raw wound, which heal'd at his command.

When GADELUS, with his wife SCOTA, from this princeſs IRELAND was firſt called SCOTA, and his followers, were leaving EGYPT to ſettle in ſome new colony, the following prophecy was declared by MOSES, tranſlated by the ſame elegant hand.

The holy prophet was inſpir'd, to ſee
Into events of dark futurity:

in DUBLIN, when BLOUNT, Lord Mountjoy, was Lord Lieutenant towards the latter end of Queen ELIZABETH's reign. Of this there are various proofs but it does not appear that there was any eſtabliſhed theatre till 1635, when the Earl of STRAFFORD was viceroy, and it ſhould ſeem that this is very probably the fact, becauſe OGILBY, hiſtoriographer to the king, was made the firſt Maſter of the Revels in the kingdom of IRELAND.

This theatre was built in Warburgh-ſtreet, where a regular company of actors continued to repreſent the celebrated pieces of that time, till 1641; when, upon the breaking out of the rebellion, all amuſements were of courſe ſuſpended, and we hear nothing more of the theatre till 1661, when a new one

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And ſaid, for thee, young prince, has Heav'n in ſtore
Bleſſings, that mortals ne'er enjoy'd before:
From whoſoe'er the royal line ſhall come,
Fruitful ſhall be their land, and ſafe their home;
No poiſonous ſnake or ſerpent ſhall deface
The beauty of the fields, or taint the graſs;
No noiſome reptile, with invenom'd teeth,
Shall ever ſwell that land, or be the cauſe of death:
But innocence and arts ſhall flouriſh there,
And learning in its lovely ſhapes appear:
The Poets there ſhall in their ſongs proclaim
Thy glorious acts, and never dying name.

was built in Smock Alley, at the inſtance, in ſome meaſure as it ſhould ſeem of the famous CATHERINE PHILLIPS, the famed Orinda, or the Engliſh Sapho, as we have ſeen her already variouſly called, her tragedy of *Pompey* having been firſt performed there from which circumſtance it is facetiouſly ſaid by ſome authors, the place took that name, it having been before that time called Orange-ſtreet.

In 1671 part of the theatre in Smock Alley fell down, and it does not appear that any other was eſtabliſhed till ſome time after the Revolution, when it ſo happened that ASHBURY, the Maſter of the Revels, was not only deſirous of encouraging acting, but was a very good actor himſelf; for, in 1691, in a new theatre built upon the ruins of the old one, we find him performing Iago, and inſtructing a number of young actors, among whom were WILKS, BOOTH, KEEN, ESTCOURT, NORRIS, GRIFFITH, BOWEN, CROSS, and TREFUSIS. The actreſſes I apprehend were not capital, for I don't find that any of them croſſed the Shannon *.

* Mr. ASHBURY from his infancy had a talent for acting. He taught queen ANNE, when ſhe was only princeſs, the part of Semandra in *Mithridates, King of Pontus*, which was performed at the Banquet-

Thus the Iriſh theatre, though ſo recently eſtabliſhed, we find under a moſt able maſter, which ASHBURY is allowed to have been, became all at once a nurſery for the Engliſh theatres, and it is very probable, after the meridian excellence of BETTERTON, and the diſtraction into which RICH threw Engliſh theatricals, that the ſtage would have dwindled away for want of actors had not ſo lucky an occaſion preſented itſelf, as that a Maſter of the Revels, and a man of fortune, ſhould not only conſider acting as a laudable, and meritorious employment, but become an actor himſelf, and induce his wife to follow his example, in order to give a conſequence to that profeſſion of which he was the patron and protector.

This very advantageous circumſtance, however, happening, men of better fortune and more liberal education, attached themſelves to the ſtage than would have done had the director been merely an adventurer. BOOTH was born of an honourable family in Lancaſhire, and brought up at Weſtminſter ſchool, and it was with ſome difficulty he could get

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ing-houſe at Whitehall, by perſons of rank. Mr. ASHBURY conducted the whole, and from this circumſtance he obtained his ſituation as Maſter of the Revels in Ireland.

on the ſtage by the conſent of his connections, and if it had not been for the example of Ashbury it is more than probable he never would been an actor. Wilks, whoſe grandfather was the famous judge of that name, may be deſcribed in the ſame manner, and this being applicable to many of the others, we ſee a whole play ſupplied by the very names of men who mere ſerving an apprenticeſhip under Ashbury in Dublin, and who afterwards came forward as maſters in London.

Ashbury continued patentee of this excluſive theatre till 1720, when he died at the age of eighty-two, and retained his judgement and faculties to the laſt moment of his life. He had been Maſter of the Revels to Charles the ſecond, William the third, queen Anne, and George the firſt, and this, of courſe, accounts for there having been no other theatre during all that period.

After the death of Ashbury a relaxation in the duty of Maſter of the Revels threw the ſtage into diſrepute, and different noblemen aſſumed a right to give licences within their liberties, and extraneous entertainments were introduced by foreigners. A certain Signora Violante, in 1732, opened a kind of booth which at length grew into a theatre. She

began with poſturing *, went on with prize-fighting, then with pantomiming, and finiſhed with plays, for BARRINGTON, NORRIS, BEAMSLY, Mrs. WOFFINGTON, and Mrs. MICHEL, appeared originally among this heterogeneous medley, till at length it was diſcovered that ſhe had no licence, and ſome years afterwards her theatre was converted into a Lying-in-Hoſpital.

During the laſt two years that Madame VIOLANTE's theatre continued open, for I believe ſhe

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* Madame ISABELLA became here a terrible ſacrifice to this ſhocking method of diverting an audience. She was born in Italy, ſprung from a noble family in the city of Florence. She was put into a nunnery at twelve years of age, in order to take the veil; but a poſture-maſter unluckily came to that city, gained her affections, and found means to carry her off, and married her; he inſtructed her in this unſeemingly and dangerous employment, and brought her to England; where Lady ISABELLA was greatly admired, for her poſtures, and feats of activity. The laſt, and fatal, time of her performance, ſhe was eight months gone with-child; but the covetous huſband loved money ſo well, as it is reported, that he would not allow her the neceſſary repoſe required in her condition; ſo that, in one of her dances on a ſlack rope, ſhe fell on the ſtage, where the mother and infant, newly born with the force of the fall, expired in a moment, fatal cataſtrophe! in her twenty-firſt year of her age. This was the running account of the poor Lady ISABELLA, after her death, whoſe end was much lamented; for, notwithſtanding her diſreputable employment, ſhe was eſteemed as a woman of ſtrict virtue.

did not reign more than five years in all. It was farmed by SPARKS, BARRINGTON, and Miſs MACKAY, afterwards Mrs. MITCHEL, for three pounds a week, and it was this lady's benefit which was patronized by the people of faſhion that conjured up a ſpirit of reſentment in the old Smock-alley managers, which induced an application to the Lord Mayor of DUBLIN, and through which they were ſuppreſſed.

My Lord MEATH, however, gave an authority to this ſame company with an actor of the name of HUSBAND at their head to build in his liberties, and in conſequence a theatre very ſoon opened in Ransford-ſtreet, which muſt have been about the year 1737. It ſhould have been known, however, that Smock alley had three years before that a much more formidable rival. The Duke of DORSET laid the firſt ſtone of a theatre in Aungier-ſtreet, which opened early in 1734.

Smock alley ſeems to have gone on with the beſt regulations, and to have reaped the greateſt profit. Aungier-ſtreet, and Ransford ſtreet oppoſed each other in various ways, having recourſe to ſpectacle, which ſeemed to be all upon a par

with the good people of Dublin, for while one houſe overflowed with The *Coronation of Henry the Eighth* at an immenſe expence, ſpectators were as numerouſly attracted at the other by The *Beggar's Coronation*, which was merely a burleſque and brought out at no expence at all.

To theſe theatres ſucceeded a houſe in Capel-ſtreet, Punch's theatre, and ſometime afterwards a playhouſe in Crow-ſtreet, but as I am now forward enough to prove how far the Iriſh theatre aſſiſted the Engliſh up to that period I ſhall not take it up again till I ſhew in what way we are obliged to it, for QUIN, Mrs. WOFFINGTON, and many other performers who joined the grand army of theatrical heroes under GARRICK.

CHAP. XIV.

MUSIC, THE OPERA, AND OTHER RELATIVE PARTICULARS.

We left the subject of music at the time when it was ripe for the improvements of Purcell, Lawes, and those other admirable composers who followed Orlando Gibbons, and the school in which he studied, and which had imbibed enough of Italian taste to polish the bold and natural character of English melody, without destroying its vernacular effect.

At the Restoration, music, which had struggled like every thing else during the troubles, began to renovate. One of the first measures taken by Charles the second was to form the establishment of a choir in the Chapel Royal, and Child, Gibbons, and Low, were appointed the organists, and Cook was master of the children. The salaries at this time were considerably augmented as an encouragement to the professors, and every other step

was taken to give dignity and conſequence to a ſcience, that CHARLES indeed had but little taſte for, except ſuch muſic as excited mirth, but that he knew it would be both gratifying and advantageous to encourage, and this politic judgment of his was ſo correct, that all the choirs in the kingdom inſtantly felt the good effects of this arrangement.

Muſic, however, was not confined to the church. It had always been a cuſtom, as we have ſeen, to entertain companies at private houſes with minſtrelſy but muſic in parts being now brought to great perfection, concerts were ſet forward; to no great effect, however, till a man of the name of BRITTON, a moſt ſingular inſtance of natural endowment, who attained to perfection every thing he ſtudied, and who ſeems to have had a moſt ſcientific mind, eſtabliſhed, under very forbidding circumſtances, a regular concert.

This BRITTON, a ſmall coal-man, in an obſcure part of the town, difficult of acceſs, in a room without ornament or accommodation, and more like a priſon than a receptacle for decent auditors, attracted all the faſhion of the age, who flocked regularly every week to taſte a delight of which the Engliſh were now ſo particulary fond, that it was conſidered

as vulgar then not to have attended BRITTON's concert, as it would be now not to have heard BANTI.

This concert continued from 1678 to 1714, during which period at different times it received perſons of the higheſt diſtinction, and performers of the higheſt eminence. The movements of muſic began now to be diſtinguiſhed, and claſſed; their wildneſs and irregularity corrected; the jig, the gavot, and the minuet, aſcertained; and every advantage given that was neceſſary to blend nature and regularity, and ſuch men as BANISTER, and LOCK, who ſeized the opportunity of giving muſic that theatrical effect it had benefited by in ITALY, fixed a ſort of familiar criterion which won upon every mind, and converted that to magic which had before been only gratification.

I cannot give a ſtronger proof of this than the muſic of Macbeth, which was compoſed by LOCK for D'AVENANT. The Engliſh ſpectator at this moment knows and admits it ſuperior merit, and I fancy it will be difficult to point out any thing, as far as it goes, that boaſts more ſterling excellence. BANISTER had at that time compoſed *Circe* with ſome reputation; but, when PURCELL began to at-

tract public attention by the compoſition of *Dido*, the words of DRYDEN's beautiful epitaph on that great man ſhews that he repeated no more than the truth for his competitors "ſung no more, or only ſung "his fame."

LEE's *Theodoſius*, DRYDEN's *King Arthur*, BETTERTON's *Propheteſs*, SHAKESPEAR's *Midſummer Night's Dream*, and a prodigious number of other dramatic pieces, which PURCELL embelliſhed with his compoſitions, gave theatrical muſic ſo decided a ſuperiority over every thing, even the Italian theatre, for ITALY had not yet been greatly celebrated except for its wonderful church muſic, and the grandeur of opera ſtyle, that this extraordinary and inſpired compoſer moſt opportunely ſhone out a muſical ÆSCHYLUS.

This will ſhew, however the Italian ſchool muſt be for ever conſidered as the true ſource for all that is great and dignified in muſic, that it is only to be reſorted to as a kind of educaion, which corrects ignorance, rubs off the hardneſſes of crude conceptions, and gives a poliſh and a taſte, but can never confer genius; and it is upon this principle that every dramatic writer would rather be a SHAKESPEAR than a JONSON, and every dramatic compoſer

a PURCELL, or an ARNE, than a BONONCINI, or even a HANDEL.

I thought it material to give this ſtrong proof that muſic, upon fair, meritorious, and natural ground, obtained with great reputation and reſpectability before the introduction of the Italian opera. The Engliſh air has a very peculiar character, which I will venture to ſay has never been felt, and, therefore, could never have been compoſed, but by Engliſhmen, and I appeal to every man of natural taſte in the kingdom, even though I involve the great HANDEL in the controverſy, whether Engliſh words have ever been ſet, ſo to affect the heart and the affections, by any foreigner, of whatever deſcriprion, as by PURCELL, ARNE, and BOYCE.

At the ſame time it is nothing more than the truth, that native beauty of all deſcriptions may acquire elegance by the adoption of foreign ornament. PURCELL himſelf ſays that muſic at that time "was learning Italian, which is its beſt maſter, "and ſtudying a little of the French air to give it "ſomewhat more of gaiety and faſhion;" none of which is amiſs in able hands, but the danger has ever been that miſtaken elegance gets fantaſtic; till, in ſcience, as in dreſs, taſte is vitiated, proportion

deformed, and natural grace diſtorted into extravagance, and caricature.

I ſhall now take up the opera at the time that ſhuttlecock SWINEY was huſtled out of his management and obliged to ſeek ſhelter in a foreign climate. There was no danger, the Italians having once taſted the ſweets of Engliſh patronage, that ſuch a market for the ſale of their wares ſhould remain unſtocked; and, fortunately for them. the very man formed by every left handed requiſite to promote their cunning, their art, and their intrigues, became the ſucceſſor to poor SWINEY.

This man, who has been a good deal celebrated, and expoſed with that honeſt truth and pointed indignation which very meritoriouſly ſtrong the pen of FIELDING, who had been a kind of a ſwindling traveller to all the courts in Europe, where he had filched away the droſs of every fantaſtic taſte, and the groſſeſt particles of every ſervile ſpecies of flattery, was called HEIDDEGER. He came to this country in the year 1708; and, though he enliſted in the Guards for protection from his creditors, he had ſo much impudence, and ſo much inſinuation, that he got acceſs in the moſt familiar way to many of the young ſprigs of faſhion, by whom he was called the Swiſs Count.

Nothing could happen ſo fortunate for him as SWINEY's declining intereſt in the opera. He inſtantly laid his eye on being his ſucceſſor, and began his approaches by degrading every thing that the Engliſh had witneſſed in the way of opera, and in ſhort keeping to that rule which foreigners invariably lay down of riſing upon the ruin of ſomebody. The Italians were of courſe glad enough to rally round him, and he collected together VALENTINI, MARGUERITA, and ſome others to whom, by way of a maſter ſtroke, to ſhew an apparent impartiality, he added an Engliſh woman, the celebrated Mrs. TOFTS, and thus armed and ſupplied by the muſic of BONONCINI, SCARLATTI, STEFFANI, GASPARINI, and ALBINONI, he took the operatical field with ſuch ſucceſs that he made priſoners of no leſs than five hundred Engliſh guineas in his very firſt attack.

This was only a *coup d'eſſai.* The opera was called *Thomyris*, and performed at the Queen's theatre at the Haymarket. It was tranſlated into Engliſh, but the Italian ſingers managed the Engliſh words ſo ill, that it became a cuſtom as before for Engliſh ſingers to ſing Engliſh, and Italian ſingers Italian, by which means nothing could be ſo ſtrange

a jumble as the opera. This is noticed perpetually in the Spectator, and indeed it is impoſſible for any thing to be ſo unnatural and diſguſting. At length, however, the operas were wholly Italian as they are now performed.

It will be neceſſary to mention that, during the ſhort time AARON HILL had the management of the opera, which we have ſeen was in 1709, he invited HANDEL, who at that time began to be in great reputation on the Continent, to bring out an opera at the Haymarket, and this new acquiſition was one of COLLIER's motives for breaking off with HILL. HEIDEGGER ſtood by contemplating theſe circumſtances and watching a proper opportunity to ſtep forward; and, thinking that a conjunction of foreign intereſts would ſerve his purpoſe he brought HANDEL forward as ſoon as poſſible with every advantage.

Rinaldo, in which there is certainly ſome beautiful muſic, was the opera HANDEL had compoſed for HILL. It had great ſucceſs, and this gave HEIDEGGER an excellent opportunity of availing himſelf of, either his German auxiliary, or his Italian allies, as occaſion might offer. He preferred Paſticcios from the Italians becauſe they coſt nothing;

but he rejoiced at this occaſion of checking his mercenaries, as well as gratifying the taſte of a people who ſwallowed every thing foreign with ſuch avidity.

Nothing, however, could exhibit ſo heterogeneous a medley as the opera. The operas compoſed by HANDEL, who was a German, were generally written in Engliſh and tranſlated into Italian. The Paſticcios were partly Engliſh and partly Italian, ſung by Engliſh and Italian ſingers, and the whole was regulated by a Swiſs manager. The conſequence of all this was perpetual diſputes and appeals to the public; and, ſo early as 1711, CLAYTON, HAYM, and DIEUPART, found their ſituations intolerable, and ſolicited ſubſcriptions for private concerts.

There can be no doubt but that the ſtrictures in the Spectator were of infinite uſe in the regulation of the Opera. ADDISON laughs very ſucceſsfully at the innovations on common ſenſe that rendered this ſpectacle more incongruous, for which there was no neceſſity, than it was in its nature obliged to be. The ſinging birds, in *Rinaldo*, is a happy opportunity for ridicule. The knocking down a part of the wall to make way for the en-

trance of a hundred horſemen, the introduction of the New River for a caſcade, and the fireworks which this water is to extinguiſh if any accident ſhould happen, are admirable ſtrokes of irony, which, however, he concludes by adviſing the proprietor to enſure his houſe previous to the performance. But ſays he, "It is no wonder that "ſcenes ſhould be very ſurprizing which were con-"trived by two poets of different nations, and "raiſed by two magicians of different ſexes," to which he might have added that the characters were performed by beings of no ſex at all.

The happy hit concerning tranſlating and retranſlating, by which means the word pity, in the original, comes in place of rage in the copy, and therefore, deſtroys the effect of the muſic, is alſo true ſatire, and the reſtleſs diſpoſition of the Engliſh, who having heard opera, wholly Engliſh, ſung unintelligibly by the Italians, afterwards half Engliſh, half Italian and at length, to ſettle the matter, who were content to hear it in a language they did not underſtand, is again a fair hit, and it cannot be denied that Addison deſerves the thanks of poſterity for theſe and other ſenſible remarks, calculated to explode the uſe of every thing incongruous and heterogeneous, for the practice of the preſent day,

ſhews us that he not only wrote a ſevere and merited critique on the monſters of 1711, but anticipated at leaſt as ſevere and as merited a critique on thoſe of 1799.

Decency, propriety, and a reſpect, and reverence, for manners, and decorum, however, made the boundary upon this ſubject to ADDISON's judgment. His opinions concerning muſic, one of which is that it will admit of nothing but nonſenſe, probably becauſe *Roſomond* did not ſucceed, are without exception erroneous, and HAWKINS is perfectly right in bringing forward, as a proof of this, his preference of French muſic to Italian. We have ſeen how differently PURCELL made the diſtinction. The Pope is ſaid to have laughed moſt heartily at this ridicule of the Italian opera in ENGLAND, which was ſenſible enough. No doubt the latter part of the critique turned the laugh from the derided, to the derider.

Operas continued to be carried on by HEIDEGGER with various ſucceſs, till the reign of GEORGE the ſecond, when that high prieſt in the temple of voluptuouſneſs introduced a ſpecies of amuſement which the court of CHARLES the ſecond, with all its profligacy, was a ſtranger to. I ſhall eaſily be underſtood to mean maſquerades. At theſe

the king, and the countefs of YARMOUTH, were highly delighted, and their projector was fo greatly encouraged being now Maſter of the Revels, which, if it be true, muſt have been apart from the office of Lord Chamberlain, a circumſtance hardly reconcileable, though I cannot refuſe to inſert it becauſe I find it confirmed by every account of this extraordinary man—and his fortune ſo augmented; that being aſked what European had the greateſt ingenuity, he himſelf anſwered a Swiſs, for that he was of SWITZERLAND, came to ENGLAND without a farthing, and had there found means to get five thouſand a year and ſpend it, which no Engliſh man ever did or could do in SWITZERLAND *.

* HEIDEGGER ſeems to have been a kind of jeſter, not only to the king but to every body elſe, as the following circumſtance will prove: "He was the firſt to joke upon his own uglineſs; and he "once laid a wager with the earl of CHESTERFIELD, that within a "certain given time, his lordſhip would not be able to produce ſo "hedious a face in all London. After ſtrict ſearch, a woman was "found, whoſe features were at firſt ſight thought ſtronger than "HEIDEGGER's; but, upon clapping her head-dreſs upon himſelf, "he was univerſally allowed to have won the wager." JOLLY, a well known taylor, carrying his bill to a noble duke; his grace, for evaſion, ſaid, "Damn your ugly face, I never will pay you till you "bring me an uglier fellow than yourſelf!" JOLLY bowed and retired, wrote a letter, and ſent it by a ſervant to HEIDEGGER, ſaying "his grace wiſhed to ſee him the next morning on particular buſi "neſs." HEIDEGGER attended, and JOLLY was there to meet him;

The hiſtory of the opera began now to conſiſt of ſo many, and ſuch inextricable particulars, that it is impoſſible to enumerate them here. HEIDDEGGER,

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and in conſequence, as ſoon as HEIDEGGER's viſit was over, JOLLY received the caſh.

Another thing is told of him ſtill more whimſical. "The facetious duke of MONTAGUE, projector of the Bottle Conjuring buſineſs, procured a maſk to be taken of HEIDEGGER, and a ſimilar dreſs to that which he was to wear at a maſquerade, and when this maſter of the ceremonies had retired, after ordering the band to play God ſave the King, upon his majeſty's arrival at the rooms, he cauſed his repreſentative to order them to play Over the Water to Charley. The company were thunderſtruck, and HEIDEGGER ran to ſet the matter to rights, ſwearing that the band were drunk or mad, and ordered them moſt peremptorily to recommence God ſave the King. The moment his back was turned the falſe HEIDDEGGER commanded Over the Water to Charley again. This went on to the delight of the king and his courtiers; till after the band had been kicked out of the orcheſtra, and their commanding officer diſtracted at this ſtrange appearance of duplicity of which he was not guilty, the counterfeit ſtepped forward and aſſured the king that he was the true HEIDDEGGER, and that the other was only the Devil in his likeneſs. The two Socias were now fairly confronted; and, after enumerating their different pretentions to the honour of being reſpectively the Swiſs Count; the real having the diſadvantage of the falſe in the pretended opinion of thoſe judges to whom they made their appeal, The duke of MONTAGUE in pity to the poor devil, who was now ſtark mad with diſappointment and vexation, made the impoſtor unmaſk and the joke was laughed off, not, however, till HEIDDEGGER had obtained a promiſe that the maſk ſhould be melted down before his face that there be no further chance of being miſtaken for the devil.

during the time he preſided as manager, which was till the year 1730, acted like another CIBBER, but was under a neceſſity of putting on a great deal more of the Machiaval. CIBBER had only Engliſh actors and actreſſes to manage, HEIDDEGGER had compoſers living and dead, and of all countries to reconcile as well as the intereſts of Engliſh and Italian ſingers, inſtrumental performers and dancers, with all the operatical ſchiſms branching from the caprice and folly of their different ſupporters.

The profeſſion of an opera ſinger was now become a matter of the greateſt importance, and the careſſes and laviſh bounty of princes had made perſons of this deſcription inſufferably inſolent. One lady, Mrs. ROBINSON, had married lord PETERBOROUGH, and others had patrons and protectors out of number; but this was not all. There was ſcarcely a perſon of quality, of either ſex, that did not appear to be faſcinated with opera ſinging, and to take inſtructions from the different performers, every one of whom had thus a ſeperate partizan, By this means no ſingle paſſion or affection could be faſhionably uttered, or ſubject diſcuſſed, without ſome quoted exclamation in bad Italian. The various diſputes about CUZZONI and FAUSTINA may ſerve as one example of that ſcandalous height

to which the insolence of opera singers was arrived, but which, nevertheless, did not reach its climax till FARINELLI.

CUZZONI had continued in exclusive possession of the opera and the public, as first singer, without a rival till FAUSTINA made her appearance. She governed so completely without control, and commanded managers, composers, and singers, with so high a hand that HANDEL, who of course had difficulty enough to brook such imperious conduct, threatened one day to throw her out of the window. She carried the matter too far in provoking the German, for he instantly put engines to work to set her up a rival, and FAUSTINA at length appeared to be a most formidable one.

No public character should ever count too long upon popularity, especially when the expectation is built upon no better basis than caprice, and fashionable taste, which vary as often and as unaccountably in matters of amusement, as in dress. No sooner did FAUSTINA appear, who for one thing was handsomer than her rival, than she had her supporters, for these people are always cunning enough to bargain for patronage before they budge a step from home.

HANDEL in this meaſure very ſenſibly hoped to beget in theſe ſingers a ſpirit of emulation, and render their different abilities the means of ſerving very laudably the purpoſe of the general operatical intereſt. CUZZONI had a fine voice, and was complete miſtreſs of the pathos; ſhe ſung naturally, appealed to the feelings, and touched the heart. FAUSTINA had great powers of execution, ſhe ſung quick paſſages with wonderful facilty, and ran diviſions to aſtoniſhment. In ſhort one pleaſed, the other ſurpriſed; one created delight, the other wonder.

HANDEL inſtantly ſet about compoſing ſongs ſuitable to their difficult ſtyles of ſinging; and, thus while CUZZONI melted the audience into tears in *Afanni del Penſier*, in Otho, FAUSTINA ſurprized them into wonder in *Alla ſua Gabbia D'oro,* in Alexander, in which ſong ſhe is ſaid to have imitated very naturally the warbling of the nightingale. This competition, however, did all HANDEL had hoped, but unfortunately at length it did a great deal more than he hoped, for it became as much a party buſineſs as a conteſted election, nay more; for the politics, in the regions of taſte, are always ſupported with greater vehemence than the politics of the ſtate.

Epigrams, lampoons, and a hundred other ſquibs, written by hungry poets, who by this means got a

dinner which was the only good the diſpute occaſioned, ſwarmed about the town. Lady PEMBROKE at head of her party, in favour of CUZZONI, took the field in perſon againſt lady BURLINGTON, who commanded a hoſt in behalf of FAUSTINA; till after riots, libels, duels, and a long *et cætera* of natural conſequences, poor CUZZONI was obliged to yield the palm to her more formidable rival; who, being younger and handſomer, had all the men on her ſide.

The managers, conſidering the matter adjuſted by the fiat of the public, thought to give an extraordinary proof of their impartiality by ſeeming at the ſame time to acknowledge the ſuperiority of FAUSTINA, and yet do juſtice to the great merits of CUZZONI. The time, therefore, being come for the renewal of articles, they made a promiſe to FAUSTINA that whatever might be the new bargain, ſhe ſhould receive a guinea a year more than her rival.

This was conſidered as ſuch a flagrant act of injuſtice by the ſupporters of CUZZONI, and in particular by lady PEMBROKE, that they made her ſwear upon the Evangeliſts never to receive leſs than FAUSTINA, and the managers, who began to be tired of the diſpute, and in particular HANDEL, to whom ſhe muſt have been a torment, determined to ſhew that

they regarded their word as facredly as ſhe her oath, fairly let her go to the Continent remunerated by her noble protectors. But to ſhew how worthily bounty of this kind is generally beſtowed, ſhe was gulled abroad by a crafty Italian, and came back to ENGLAND in 1748, when being old, and having loſt her voice her former benefactors did not chuſe to know her, but on the contrary intimated that it was wicked in her to break her oath, which, however, ſhe did and performed in MITHRIDATE; till, finding it would not do, ſhe once more returned to ITALY, where ſhe died in indigence.

FAUSTINA was more fortunate. She took care of a good fortune which ſhe had acquired in ENGLAND, and afterwards was married to HASSE the famous compoſer, at DRESDEN, and was twenty years ago living very much reſpected at VIENNA. It is impoſſible to paſs over this article without giving ſome circumſtances relative to FARINELLI, with which, and a brief account of opera compoſers, and ſingers, I ſhall cloſe the fourth volume of this work.

The arrival of FARINELLI, who came over to ENGLAND with PORPORA the compoſer, and AMICONI, the painter, was announced with as much parade as if he had come embaſſador to ſettle the moſt important intereſts of the nation. He was gazed at as a

prodigy, introduced to the king, accompanied on the harpſichord in his *coup d'eſſai* by the Princeſs of Orange, invited to companies of the firſt diſtinction, and happy were they who could blunder out a com. compliment in Italian to this wonderful being, or receive from him the great condeſcenſion of a ſupercilious anſwer.

SENESINO was in poſſeſſion of the ſtage, like CUZZINO, before FAUSTINA, when this phænomenon came to eclipſe him. SENESINO's merit was alſo ſimplicity and pathos, and FARINELLI's execution, which he is ſaid to have carried to a moſt aſtoniſhing exceſs. We are told that he had an octave more in his voice than any other ſinger ever poſſeſſed, and that the moſt extenſive woman's voice ever known had no ſuch compaſs in alt. Poor SENESINO, with all his ſweetneſs of tone, which he is allowed to have had in a ſuperior degree to FARINELLI, was of courſe thrown into the back ground.

The preſents he received were innumerable; he was idolized by the women of faſhion to adoration. One lady exclaimed from the boxes, "One GOD, "one FARINELLI!" This infatuation was ſo exceſſive, ſo effiminate, and ſo diſgraceful, that not only ſeveral manly writers of our own country, but foreigners, reprobated in terms of aſtoniſhment and

diſdain ſuch a departure from the hardy, honeſt, and honourable character for which Britons had ever been ſo glorioufly diſtinguiſhed, and the obloquy and contempt into which they would inevitably plunge themſelves by emulating the taſte and folly of a nation long ſince ſunk into voluptuouſneſs and imbecility.

The misfortune was that during all this time nobody knew why this laviſh applauſe, and more laviſh bounty, for FARINELLI received more than five thouſand a year, was beſtowed. Not one in fifty was capable of giving a reaſon why he ſung better than SENESINO; and, as to his deportment, it was diſguſting beyond meaſure, his figure being as tall as a giant, and as thin as a ſhadow, therefore, if he had grace it could be only of a ſort to be envied by a penguin, or a ſpider.

But let us turn from this monument of Engliſh folly to examine the reſt of the operatical corps; who, though in ſome meaſure their encouragement was reproachable enough, did not ſo abjectly diſgrace us, in particular the compoſers, for their labours were meritorious, and worthy of the countenance they received.

The contention at this time lay between the Ita-

lians, the Germans, and the Engliſh. The Italian muſic upon the whole had the preference for a time, and probably would have eſtabliſhed a correcter taſte, had not HANDEL, with all his merit, kept up that coldneſs and phlegm that was but too apparent in the ſtyle of our profeſſors. It gave a ſpirit of emulation to ſucceed in abſtruſe harmony and ſtudied modulation, and if PURCELL had been obliged to reſtrain his genius, before HANDEL, how much more muſt it have been neceſſary for ſuch compoſers as GREEN, TRAVERS, GATES, and others, many of whom, unable to conteſt the point with foreigners, purſued a more profitable though a leſs reputable courſe; and, as they could not get their own muſic a reception, taught that of others which was more to the public taſte.

The Italians, however, did not ſo tacitly aquieſce in yielding the ſuperiority to HANDEL, and BONONCINI in particular ſet himſelf forward in as pointed a conteſt with that compoſer, as that of CUZZONI and FAUSTINA*. HANDEL, however, carried his point triumphantly; and thus, with all the

* SWIFT's whimſical note of Tweedledum and Tweedledee was written upon this occaſion, at which a living author, as amiable in his manners as he is elegant in his writings, has, I think a little too faſtidiouſly taking umbrage. I don't know how far SWIFT had a ſoul for muſic, but it is plain he does not in this caſe ridicule the merit of the men but the folly of the public.

ſolid and ſubſtantial merit of the various pieces brought out by this celebrated compoſer, the opera was certainly not of that ſpecies beſt calculated to command the admiration of this country, till the more ſplendid and general beauties in the melodies of JOMELLI, PERGOLESI, and GALLUPPI, cleared away that buzz of harmonic combination that had ſo long perplexed, but not ſatisfied, the Engliſh ear.

As to the performers. I have ſhewn they were partly Engliſh and partly Italians. This mixture, indeed, had been always cuſtomary. Mrs. ARABELLA HUNT had been in PURCELL's time as celebrated as was afterwards Mrs. TOFTS, and after her Mrs. ROBINSON, MARGUERITA, ISABELLA, GIRARDEAU, the BARONESS, GALLIA, and then FAUSTINA, CUZZONI, and others were the female ſingers; as to the men, VALENTINI kept the ſtage till he was driven out by SENESINO, who afterwards gave way to FARINELLI, even as one wedge driveth out another, as ADDISON makes Vellum ſay in the *Drummer*. The opera, however, was now, like every thing elſe dramatic, drawing to the zenith of its reputation, having acquired a ſplendour and a conſequence ſoon after the firſt appearance of GARRICK.

END OF THE FOURTH VOLUME.

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